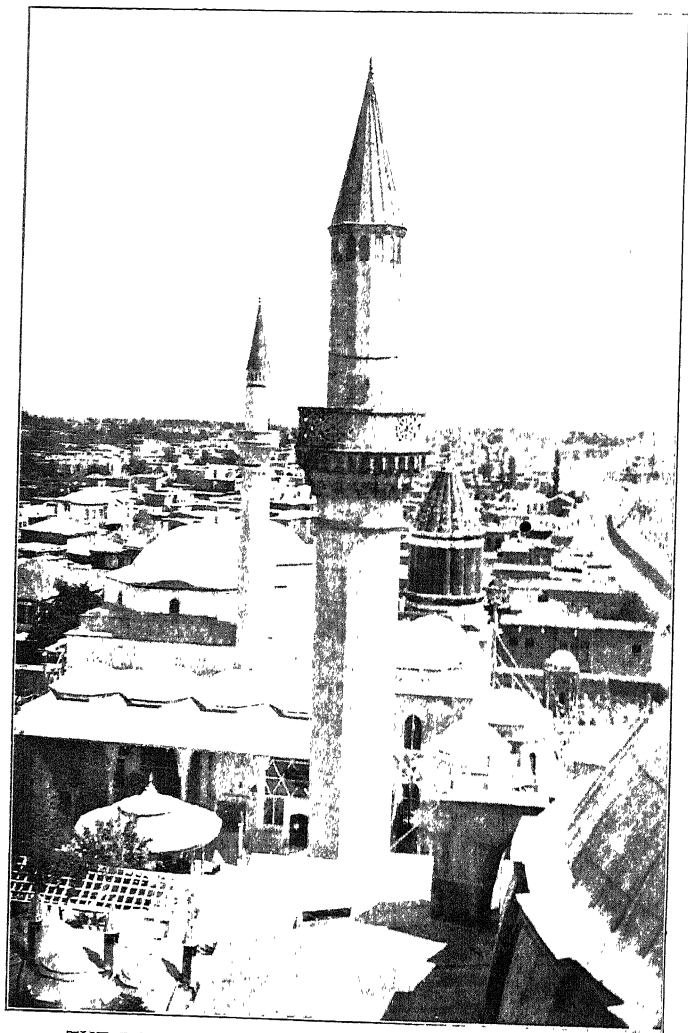


PLATE I



THE FORMER HEADQUARTERS OF THE DANCING  
DERVISHES, KONIA.

From a minaret of the Selimieh Mosque.

*Frontispiece.*

# AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

*By*

SIR HARRY LUKE

C.M.G., B.LITT., M.A.

*Lieutenant-Governor of Malta*

ILLUSTRATED

“The East is a University in which the scholar never takes his degree. It is a temple where the suppliant adores but never catches sight of the object of his devotion. It is a journey the goal of which is always in sight but is never attained. There we are always learners, always worshippers, always pilgrims.”

*Lord Curzon.*



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TO  
MY MOTHER  
AND THE MEMORY OF  
MY FATHER



## PREFACE

IN these days of kaleidoscopic change in the Near East, some of the features of a Turkey that survived to within a few years ago are receding so rapidly into the past that they now seem almost as remote as if they had come to an end when Sultan Mahmud II. sought to remodel his Empire on western lines a century ago. Among such features I would cite that Head of a Dervish Order whose privilege it was to gird the Padishahs at their accession with the sword of Osman, that Turkish Rhodes whose gates were closed daily at sunset by the call of a bugle to all Christians. Some of its features, on the other hand, such as that most complete example of the *millet* system, the Nestorians (whom some call Assyrians) under their hereditary Patriarch, such as the Prince of the Yezidis, whose devil-worshipping but gentle flock are now divided by the frontier between Syria and Iraq, have attained a fresh and unexpected prominence through finding themselves the subjects of new States thrown up by the War. It has seemed to me, therefore, that it might be worth while to collect between one set of covers some of the results of observation made and experience gained, as a traveller and as an administrator, at different stages of a period of such far-reaching change in a part of the world which can

## PREFACE

hardly be matched elsewhere for diversity of race, custom, faith, history, tradition, architecture, costume and the beauties of nature. In my selection I have aimed at ranging as widely as possible over this infinite variety. The following pages will be found to include accounts of life in ancient Byzantine hermitages, some of which you can approach only if you are an athlete, others only if you are a male; in the establishments of Dancing Dervishes; in the tents of the Beduin of mid-desert; in that Babel of Christianity, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre; in the castle of the Chief of the devotees of Satan. They deal with such diverse types as Ottoman Governors, hereditary Bishops, designers of Qoranic texts, Christian monks of every hue, the component parts of that mosaic of races and tongues and creeds which is Jerusalem, the "Mr. Punch" of Asia Minor. They mention people who write the Turkish language in the Greek script, people who date their era from the capture of Babylon by Seleucus Nicator, people who have seen fit to canonize Pontius Pilate and keep Christmas once a month, people who celebrate their liturgy in the speech of the Pharaohs. They attempt to describe the desert and sown, mountain and plain and islands, "green days" in forests and "blue days" by the sea.

To Messrs. Macmillan I extend my thanks for their kindness in allowing me to reproduce here extracts from *The Fringe of the East*, *The City of Dancing Dervishes* and *Anatolica*, to Messrs. Martin Hopkinson and the Faith Press for similar courtesy as regards *Mosul and its Minorities* and *Prophets, Priests and Patriarchs* respectively. I wish to thank

## PREFACE

Miss Ros Fisher and Lieut.-Commander P. Archdale, R.N., for kindly lending me three views of Rhodes. The remaining illustrations, with few exceptions, are taken from my own photographs.

H. C. L.

*Casa dei Leoni,*  
*Malta,*  
*March, 1934.*

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## PROLOGUE

HE was an old Turkish scribe, and he looked like the pictures of Khoja Nasr ed-Dîn in the illustrated editions of the tales of the Anatolian jester. That is to say, he was a little man with a shrewd, weather-beaten, kindly face and a stubbly, closely trimmed beard that was going grey. He was generally clad in a bottle-green gown, threadbare but neat, and around his fez was wound the white *sariq* which in Turkey denotes the student and the teacher of Qoranic law. Under his gown he wore baggy Turkish trousers, ending vaguely somewhere about the ankles, and on his feet heel-less boots of the softest goat-skin, protected by outer slippers which he kicked off when he came indoors. He lived in a small country town of one of Turkey's lost provinces, inhabiting a little mud house plastered white, with green shutters and a roof of cedar rafters. Here he plied his trade, in a room furnished only with a wooden divan and a shelf of the type which in Turkish is called a *raf*. The *raf* was narrow and ran all round the walls, and held the old fellow's writing materials and his coffee-cups and pots and pans. He wrote petitions and, indeed, anything he was asked to write, for the illiterate; but he regarded with distaste this, the sordid part of his struggle for a livelihood. He was a calligraphist who loved his art; and his art lay in writing texts from the

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

Qoran for old-fashioned mosques that still preferred the work of the scribe to that of the lithographer.

The old man was not only an artist but a philosopher and a companionable one to boot; and it was pleasant to drop in from time to time to drink a cup of coffee with him and to watch him as he composed his *ayet* with the unerring hand of the master. Spread uncomfortably (as we should think) on his knee, as he squatted on the divan, was the square of paper, with beautiful ivory surface; stuck in his sash the brass implement which held his Indian ink and his reed pens. Sometimes he would dispense with the reed and use the nail of his little finger, grown long for the purpose; and it was with his nail, I am inclined to think, that he contrived his most graceful *divani* and *naskhi* and *taliq*, his boldest and subtlest combinations of dots and vowel-points and hierographic flourishes. Much, artistically, may be done with a script in which it is permissible to place the letters in the order in which they look prettiest rather than in the order in which they are meant to be read; and the old gentleman made the most of his opportunities.

On the walls of his room my friend had hung a few examples of his skill, and one day it occurred to me to consider these in their primary capacity rather than as specimens of mural decoration. I had assumed that their primary capacity was to admonish the soul and not to please the eye, and it appeared that I had assumed correctly. For the texts proved to be of those not generally selected to adorn the house of prayer or the habitations of the pious; and I can imagine that some of the calligraphist's visitors must have read them with pained

## PROLOGUE

astonishment. For these are the messages which I found them to convey to those who might chance to decipher them :

*"When trouble befalleth a man,"* proclaimed one, *"he crieth to Us ; afterwards, when we have vouchsafed favour to him, he saith, 'God knew that I deserved it.'"*

In similar vein spoke the next :

*"There were some of them who made a covenant with God : verily, if He gives us of His abundance, we will give alms and become righteous people."*

And again the third :

*"When a misfortune befalleth you at sea, they whom ye invoke are not to be found : God alone is there : yet when He bringeth you safe to dry land, ye place yourselves at a distance from Him."*

The fourth displayed the following admirable precepts :

*"Distort not thy face at men, nor walk thou loftily on the earth ; for God loveth no arrogant vain-glorious one."*

*"But let thy pace be middling ; and lower thy voice ; for the least pleasing of voices is surely the voice of asses."*

Clearly the old man knew the foibles of his kind and mocked at them from his walls with silent satire. But he was too kindly a soul to confine his display to unpalatable home-truths. Opposite the door there hung side by side two texts of more acceptable import :

*"God hath said,"* announced the one : *"'This is the day when truth is of much benefit to those that speak it.'"*

And the other was a verse which is often in the mouths of Moslems :

*"Say not thou of a thing,"* it runs, *"'I will surely do it to-*

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

*morrow,' without 'if God will.' And when thou hast forgotten, call thy Lord to mind; and say, 'Haply my Lord will guide me, that I may come near to the truth of this story with correctness.' "*

It is in the spirit of the last few words that I have tried to write the following pages. Disjointed as the chapters may seem, they may claim a certain unity as representing one man's outlook upon a variety of Near and Middle Eastern scenes and aspects. Haply they are tedious, haply they were not worth the writing, but the virtue of accuracy, at least, I trust is theirs. In the words of the text, I have come near to the truth of my story with correctness—in *sha Allah*, if God will.



## CHAPTER I

### MONASTERIES IN GREECE

THOSE who travel by sea anywhere but along the eastern shores of the Mediterranean and wish to ascertain beforehand how much their passages will cost them are able to do so to a nicety by reference to printed documents which the steamship companies supply. In the Levant such documents, although plentiful, belong definitely to the category of fiction; and it is usually the law of supply and demand which sets upon your journey its ever-fluctuating price. When, therefore, on a cold, clear December morning we left the solid comforts of the British School of Archæology in Athens and, having arrived at the Piræus, demurred at paying fifteen drachmæ a head for conveyance to Itea, the agent of one of the most forbidding little craft that disgraced the Gulf of Corinth frankly explained :

“ Ah, had you come yesterday, when both the *Thermopylæ* and the *Diadochos*<sup>1</sup> *Konstantinos* were competing for passengers to Delphi, doubtless you might have gone for eight drachmæ. To-day, happily, the *Lordos Buron* has no rival.”

So in the *Lordos Buron* we passed between Salamis and Ægina, passed through the Corinth Canal which was projected by the Emperor Nero and opened by King George of Greece, and in due course

<sup>1</sup> Crown Prince.

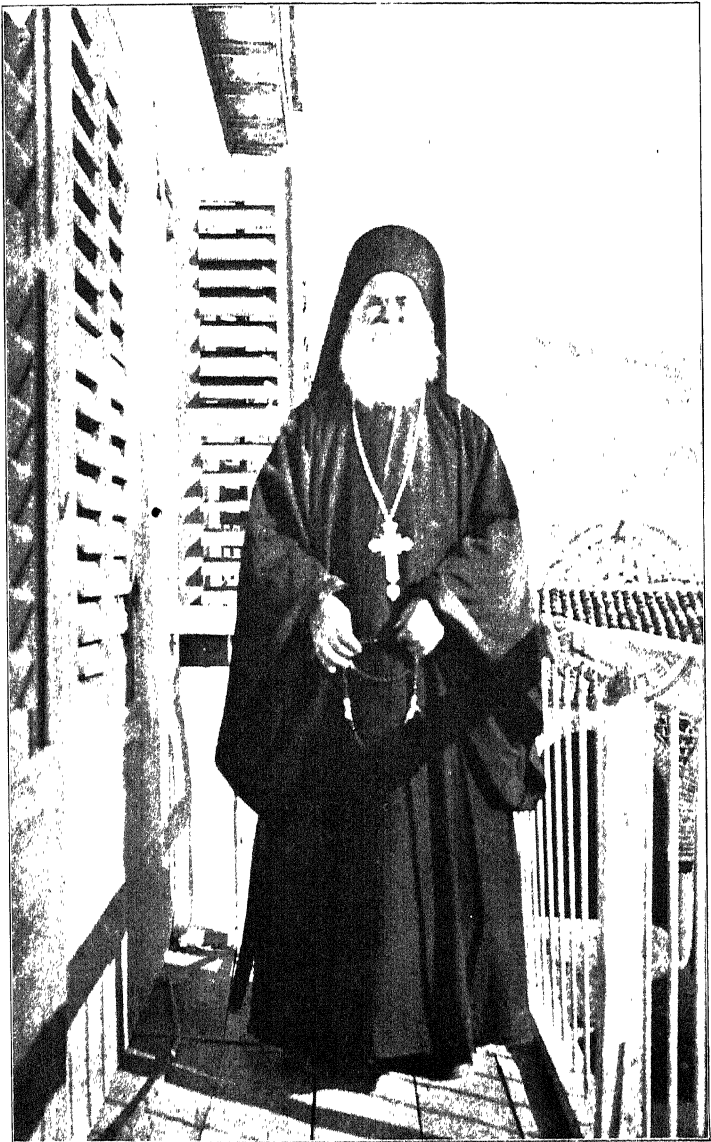
## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

arrived at Itea, still, as in ancient times, the port of Delphi for those not journeying overland from the north, but now a decayed little village having nothing but Parnassus, its background, to commend it. From Itea a modern carriage-road winds up the side of the mountain, intersected at intervals by vestiges of the straight processional path along which the pilgrims from the Peloponnese rode, walked and danced to the great shrine of Pythian Apollo. Both toward the Gulf and inland the views are very lovely; and it is easy to understand how Delphi, by the impressive beauty of its rugged, lofty and thickly wooded surroundings, arrested the imagination of ancient Greece so deeply as to become the seat of the oracle which made of it "the navel of the world." On this occasion, however, our principal objective was not Delphi but the ancient monastery of S. Luke in Stiris, which lies in Phocis, to the south-east of Parnassus; and our visit to S. Luke, one of the most important Byzantine monuments in Greece, was intended as a preparation for visits to *Metéora* and Mount Athos, the one a bygone, the other a yet vigorous centre of Byzantine monasticism.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> We were a party of five on the expedition from Athens to S. Luke in Stiris and back to Athens. The name of the modern village by the ruins of Delphi is *Kastri*; that of the innkeeper, who did us well, was *Paraskevé*. We were rather pleased with the polyglot Limerick—in English, German, French, Turkish and Modern Greek—which we composed as a tribute to his efforts :

Five pilgrims arrived at *Kastri*.  
Ermüdet und kalt waren sie.  
Mais, je vous en assure,  
Bu khân eyi dir,  
*Kal μπᾶβα σάς, Παρασκευή.*

PLATE II







## MONASTERIES IN GREECE

Owing to their numbers, their wealth and their influence, the monasteries play, and have played from early times, an exceedingly important part in the life of the Levant. The oriental mind has always displayed a pronounced leaning towards monasticism. Both in the Ottoman Empire itself, as in all the countries which have now become independent of it, the number of monasteries seems strangely high if assessed by a western standard. The island of Cyprus, for example, with an area of only 3584 square miles, contains no fewer than eighty-two; and I quote Cyprus, not because it is richer in monasteries than other parts of the East but because its statistics are more reliable. Wherever, as you travel through Greece, Macedonia, the islands of the Archipelago, Asia Minor, Syria or Kurdistan, you espy an eligible site, a fruitful valley, a safe and sheltered nook with an abundant supply of water, you are almost certain to find that it houses a settlement of monks. Some Greek monasteries, no doubt, are little more than farms; others may contain only two or three monks or even a solitary ascetic. But many have been lavishly endowed in the past by Byzantine Emperors with estates situated in almost every province of the Empire; and, as these estates, known as *metochia*, have not been alienated, their possessors continue to derive from them very handsome revenues. To these revenues, again, were often added the pious donations of other Christian potentates, of Hospodars, Voivodes, Sebastocrats and Jupans, in Russia, the Balkans and even the distant Caucasus.

The influence of the monasteries, considerable

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

throughout the Levant, is particularly felt in the Turkish Empire itself. The native inhabitants of European Turkey are divided for administrative purposes into *millet*s, that is, "nations," which rest on a basis religious rather than racial. Moslems, of whatever race they may be, compose the *millet* of Islam; and the *rayahs*, the Christian subjects of the Porte, form separate *millet*s according as they acknowledge the Patriarch of Constantinople, the Pope, the Bulgarian Exarch, the Armenian Patriarch and so on, as their ecclesiastical superior. As a result of this system and of the fact that to each Christian *millet* a measure of autonomy is given, the Churches in Turkey are not only spiritual refuges but the rallying-grounds of national aspirations; where creed is so largely synonymous with nationality, is indeed the dominant classification of men, the Church is in many respects the backbone of national consciousness and its Head not only a spiritual chief but also a political ethnarch. And while the Church thus becomes the nucleus of national existence and propaganda, the monastery is very largely the nucleus of the Church. In the Eastern Churches only celibate or widowed priests and deacons can attain episcopal orders; the hierarchy is consequently recruited to a great extent from the ranks of the regular clergy. Thus there are concentrated in the monasteries not only those who seek to retire from the world but many eager and enterprising spirits whose aim is precisely the reverse. All large monasteries, especially those of Mount Athos, are fruitful nurseries of bishops, metropolitans and patriarchs; they are also, owing to the distressing absence of security of tenure

## MONASTERIES IN GREECE

which the history of Orthodox sees reveals, havens of refuge whence these intrigue for the downfall of their successors. Often, moreover, in the Orthodox and habitually in the other Eastern Churches bishops reside permanently in monasteries and govern their sees from them, all of which will serve to indicate the weight of monastic influence on the ecclesiastical and political affairs of the Levant and the attraction of the monastic life for the ambitious.

Eastern monasteries have yet another function, to which travellers off the beaten track will gratefully bear witness. In many outlying parts of the Near and Middle East they are the only substitutes for hotels, the only establishments where strangers may be sure to find both food and shelter. No monastery, however small, is without a guest-chamber and accommodation for beasts; and the guest-master (*ἀρχοντάρης* or *ξενοδόχος*) is one of the recognized monastic officials. In theory the hospitality of the monks is at the free disposal of all who ask for it, but in practice it is usual for the guest, on departure, to leave a small sum of money, calculated according to the length of his stay, in the alms-dish inside the church. The only exception to this custom, in my experience, is made on Mount Athos, where the monks not only refuse money but even provide free transport in the shape of mules to carry visitors from one monastery to another.

From the archæological and artistic point of view the monasteries are no less important than from the political and the religious. Themselves examples of early Byzantine architecture in both its religious and its domestic forms, they enshrine

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

treasures of every manifestation of Byzantine artistic and intellectual activity. Robert Curzon's *Visits to the Monasteries of the Levant* first revealed to the world in general the abundance of mosaics, frescoes, *orfèvrerie* and priceless manuscripts which they contained, works of art of whose value and interest their owners were equally oblivious. Those were the days when the leaves of uncial manuscripts were used as covers for jam-pots, when eleventh-century illuminated Gospels might be had for the asking. By the time that he had reached the end of his journey, Curzon, that fortunate hunter of manuscripts, must have bagged at least a boat-load of his venerable prey. Things have changed, however, in the last eighty years; and, although it is doubtful if the monks now study their literary treasures any more than they did in the time of Tischendorf and Curzon, they have become more alive to their value. Their remaining manuscripts have been examined, collated and catalogued by foreign scholars; their reliquaries and valuable icons have been inventoried and described. The days of looting are over and the monasteries are once more what they would never have ceased to be but for the slothful and culpable ignorance of the monks—specimens as well as storehouses of the products of a fascinating region and epoch, each one a Musée de Cluny, if the expression may be allowed, of mediæval Byzantine and early Christian art.

In plan and in appearance they but little recall the well-ordered settlements of western monks and friars. There is no symmetry in the grouping of their buildings, very rarely any attempt at external

## MONASTERIES IN GREECE

embellishment. Occupying, as a rule, strategical positions and enclosed for safety within stout battlemented walls, they have the appearance of fortified towns or villages, which in a sense, indeed, they are. A strong gatehouse admits into the monastery; a tower of observation surmounts its domes and roofs. And within, no stately quadrangles and grassy plots, no sheltered cloisters are found. In the middle of an irregular space stands the principal church of the monastery, the many-domed Katholikon; around it cluster without method the monastic buildings and dwellings of the monks, of different heights, of different periods, of different materials. Some possess arcaded galleries opening on to the court, others sport innumerable wooden balconies of flimsy and perilous construction. A few paces in front of the Katholikon there generally stands the ancient marble fountain of liturgical ablution from which the Moslems have derived the washing-place attached to every mosque; below the cells of the monks are stables, granaries, oil and wine presses, cellars and every other accessory of a large manor or farm. The agricultural element is, in fact, almost as prominent as the religious, and the domestics and labourers of the monastery, of both sexes except on Athos, form the bulk of its population. But little attempt is made, as a rule, to keep the monasteries in proper repair, and they are usually exceedingly untidy when not actually in a state of decay. To this condition, to the charm of site and architecture and to the intimate blend of the ecclesiastical and the bucolic, they owe a strange picturesqueness very difficult to describe. Their massive substructures, their irregular outlines,

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

their tiers of overhanging galleries and roofs, their bizarre medley of towers, walls and domes, give them more affinity with the Lamascrais of Tibet than with monasteries of western Europe.

It cannot, unfortunately, be claimed that the spiritual and intellectual standards of Greek monasteries are on a level with their picturesqueness. Take, for example, the morning Office of the community in a typical monastic church. It is dark without, and the dimness within is intensified by the sombre frescoes on the walls, the flickering candlelight and the incense which slowly rises to the dome in coils of fragrant blue smoke. The celebrants in their vestments, the congregation of monks standing in their stalls, have retained the dignified immobility, the mediæval features and appearance of those Byzantine saints before whose stiff and lifeless images they stand in daily contemplation. The ones perform, the others follow the rites with a mechanical precision which their minds seem to have no part in producing. No doubt the traditions of some of the Eastern Churches are apt to militate against individual thought and emotion; it would seem to be their aim to cast their victims into an uniform hieratic mould, suppressing all promptings of the soul. Thus it happened that, in a monastery known to me which cherishes a particular veneration for S. Nicephorus, a young monk showed some talent for painting and endeavoured to quicken his art by departing a little from the rigidity of the Byzantine style, a style which in the course of ages has been so entirely unaffected by change that it is often difficult to distinguish a fresco of the tenth century from one of the seven-

## MONASTERIES IN GREECE

teenth. The Abbot chanced to see some of the boy's drawings and administered a severe reprimand; he subsequently explained to a protesting visitor that as the monk was destined all his life only to paint portraits of S. Nicephorus it was obviously undesirable that he should waste his time in attempts to become an artist.

Portraits of S. Nicephorus, representing an emaciated anchorite with a prodigious beard, recur frequently in the monastery in question, and the story of how this holy man came by his beard is perhaps worth transcribing from the ancient tome in which I found it :

*"He was a person of the most eminent virtues of his time. But his great misfortune was that the endowments of his mind were not set off with the outward ornament of a beard. Upon occasion of which defect he fell into a deep melancholy. The Devil, taking the advantage of this Priest, promised to give him that boon which Nature had deny'd in case he would comply with his suggestions. The beardless Saint, tho' he was very desirous of the reward propos'd, yet he would not purchase it at that rate neither : but rejected the previous bribe with indignation, declaring resolutely that he had rather for ever despair of his wish than obtain it upon such terms. And at the same time, taking in hand the downy tuft upon his chin to witness the stability of his resolution (for he had it seems beard enough to swear by), Behold ! as a reward for his constancy, he found the hair immediately stretch with the pluck that he gave it. Whereupon finding it in so good a humour, he follow'd the happy omen : and as young heirs that have been niggardly bred generally turn prodigals when they come to their estates, so he never desisted from pulling his beard till he had wiredrawn it down to his feet."*

Of the peculiar skill which eastern monks have always manifested in the choice of sites, S. Luke presents an admirable example. The monastery, invisible from the west, only comes into sight as you round the hill on one of whose spurs it stands,



## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

a spur projecting into a broad semi-circular valley whose fresh turf and scattered oaks are reminiscent of an English park. From their well-concealed and comfortable retreat the fortunate *kalogeroi* (such is the Greek word for monks; its literal meaning, "good old men") survey a beautiful and peaceful domain, rich and green and sunny, enclosed by the hills as no walls could enclose it, well wooded, well watered, well tilled. Hither after many wanderings there came in or about the year 940 the hermit Luke, a native of Macedonia and typical product of an age when many sought happiness and some, perhaps, distinction in the practice of austerities which contrasted vividly with the prevailing violence and rudeness of life. Luke had commenced his search for isolation on the slopes of Mount Joannitsa, not far from the spot where, some forty years later, he was to end it. Here, however, his solitude was troubled by the incursions of the Bulgarian Tsar Simeon and he passed on to Corinth, then to Patras, then, ever seeking to leave the world behind him, to Kalamion in Santa Maura. From Kalamion he was driven by an Arab invasion to the small island of Ampelos, and in Ampelos he lived for three years. But he was not yet satisfied. The companionship of the sea disturbed his craving for loneliness and again he wandered on, until he found his goal at last in this lovely corner of Phocis, which Parnassus cut off from the habitations of other men.

For seven years he enjoyed its quiet delights and then expired, after having begun to build a chapel which he dedicated to S. Barbara.

It was not long before men told of miracles performed at his tomb; and in due course the anchor-

## MONASTERIES IN GREECE

ite's retreat became a large and flourishing monastery, the humble chapel of S. Barbara the magnificent church of S. Luke, declared by the seventeenth century traveller Wheler to be second only to that of S. Sophia in Constantinople. That the pilgrims who flocked to the wonder-working tomb were many and generous is attested by the sumptuous decoration of the church: its floor is paved with *opus alexandrinum*; its walls, from the ground to the spring of the vault, are faced with slabs of rare marbles of divers colours, the spoil, no doubt, of many earlier buildings. Finally, in accordance with a principle of Byzantine architecture only applicable to churches of great wealth, every inch of vaulting was adorned with rich mosaics, which are still, with the exception of those in the dome, in good repair. Soon, too, it was found that one church was unable to accommodate both monks and pilgrims; and the smaller but almost equally interesting Church of the Theotokos (Mother of God) was accordingly built for the use of the monks on the north side of the other.

We remained a day and a night at S. Luke and then returned to Athens, riding through Dhavlia, the ancient Daulis, and joining the railway on the following day by that patched-up monster with a vacant smile, the Lion of Chæronca. Not long afterwards my friend Harry Pirie-Gordon and I went on to Volo and touched on the way at Chalcis, the capital of Eubœa, which an iron swingbridge, spanning the strait of Euripus, connects with the mainland. Chalcis is a picturesque place, thanks to its Venetian battlements and Turkish minarets, and it is remarkable for the mysterious current which, notwith-

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standing the almost complete absence of tide, four times or so a day changes the otherwise placid strait into the fierce race wherein Aristotle is said to have lost his life in an endeavour to probe its secret. From Volo, a thriving port devoid of interest, a railway runs north-westward through the rich plain of Thessaly to the village of Kalabaka, a distance of a hundred miles, and from Kalabaka, formerly called Stagous (*εἰς τοὺς ἁγίους*—to the holy ones), you continue, on foot or on an ass, to the bases of the fantastic natural pillars on whose summits are perched τὰ μετέωρα μοναστήρια, the Monasteries of Mid-Air.

At one time a cliff about 1800 feet high rose at this point above the Thessalian plain, its summit forming a more or less level plateau. In the course of ages erosion has converted this cliff into something like twenty-five vertical pillars, some cylindrical, some polygonal, which stand like giant ninepins above Kalabaka; and in the fourteenth century Byzantine monks, emulous, perhaps, of the earlier Stylites or fearful of wars and alarums, built monasteries upon the flat tops of the pillars, the largest of which offer barely an acre or two of surface, the smaller very much less. In days gone by every pillar was capped by a monastery; in these days only the four monasteries of Metéoron, Hagios Stephanos, Hagios Barlaam and Hagia Trias possess communities of monks, now rapidly dwindling. In Hagia Roxané death has reduced the number of inmates to one and, when he, too, disappears, one monastery the more will be added to those which are now uninhabited except by eagles and are inaccessible to men for want of anyone inside

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to pull them up. The means of approach to the monasteries of Metéora are of two kinds only: either the visitor must enter a rope basket which is let down for him by the monks (you attract their attention by shouting or, if that does not avail, by shooting) and is then drawn up by a windlass, bumping the while against the rock; or, if he be a man of nerve, he may ascend by perilous step-ladders that swing loosely away from the overhanging cliff. How the founders of these establishments originally attained the tops of their respective pillars remains a matter for conjecture; certain it is that, in the monasteries now deserted, the unburied bones of the last monk to die run small risk of being disturbed. The life of step-ladders not constantly repaired is brief: I attempted the ascent of the abandoned Hagia Moné but the decayed ladder gave way at the fifth or sixth rung, and I reverted rapidly to the plain.

We visited each of the inhabited monasteries in turn, beginning with Hagios Stephanos which, unlike the others, is isolated on three sides only. It is true that on the fourth side a chasm narrow but deep intervenes between it and the adjacent mountain, but in times of peace a drawbridge is conveniently thrown across. The monks of Metéora are more immune from unwelcome visitors, I suppose, than any other community. In Hagios Stephanos it is a matter of drawing up the bridge, in the others of not letting down the bag; and Armatoles, Antartis and other importunates threaten and foam in vain. Our Abbot, however, appeared to be quite pleased to see us and, after bestowing the kiss of peace at the gate, led us into the reception

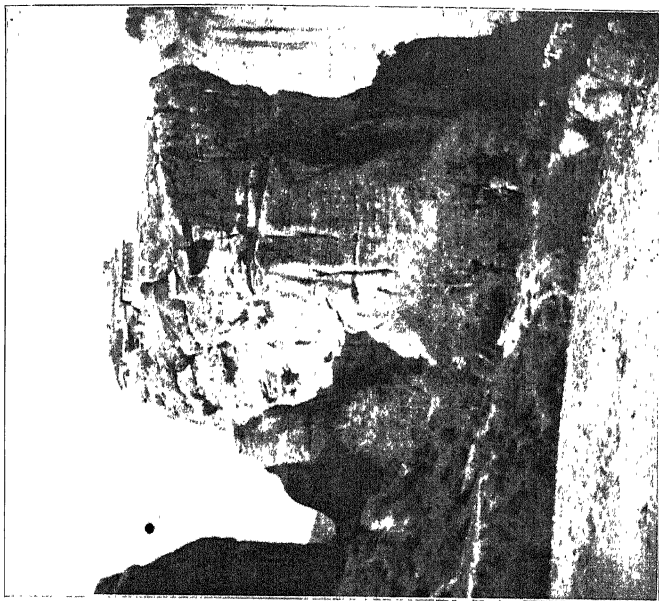
## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

room, from whose loyal walls their Hellenic Majesties, the Diadoch and the Patriarch of Constantinople beamed in oleographic complacency. Coffee was brought, and jam and *masticha*, a liqueur of varying nastiness much in vogue in eastern monasteries; and the Abbot, whose name was Sophronios, inquired politely after the health of the Archbishop of 'Canterviri.' We conversed desultorily till the evening, when a monk conducted us to the guest-chamber and to a supper of fried eggs, goat's milk cheese and unleavened bread and left us to our own devices until morning.

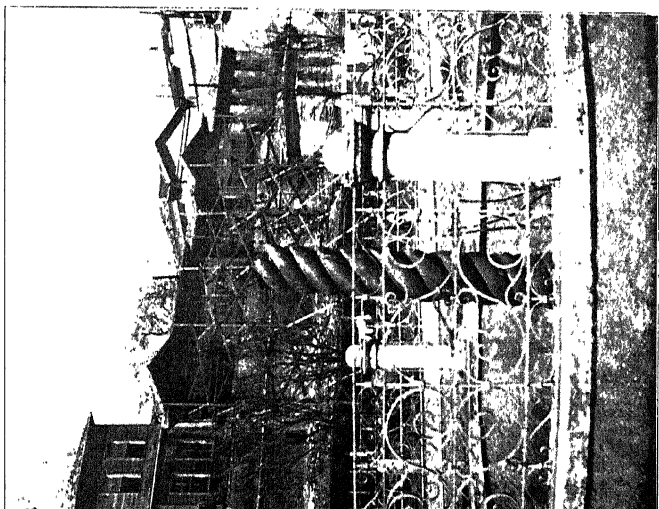
On fine days the views from Hagios Stephanos must be superb; unfortunately, we were afflicted with rain and mist which only allowed of the briefest glimpses on the one side over the plain, on the other across clefts and abysses to the grotesque forest of hermit-laden pillars. Hagia Trias is, perhaps, the most characteristic of these monasteries, its ascent the least enjoyable. It has two churches lined with much blackened frescoes depicting austere Byzantine saints, the older of the two being entirely rock-hewn. Metéoron is the highest and largest and also rejoices in two churches as well as in a venerable refectory, used, now that the monks are too few to fill it, as a storeroom for grain. Hagios Barlaam proved, however, the most interesting to us, not only because its churches and frescoes were the best preserved but also because the evening which we spent within its walls was a revelation of what an evening could be in an ancient Byzantine hermitage.

Now the holy Basil, the founder of Greek monasticism, has ordained that four times in the year shall his faithful followers submit to prolonged spells of

PLATE III



HAGIA TRIAS, METÉORA.



ERPENT COLUMN FROM DELPHI: NOW IN  
THE ATMEIDAN, CONSTANTINOPLE.



## MONASTERIES IN GREECE

fasting; and we chanced to arrive at Barlaam as the Advent fast, which continues from the 15th November until Christmas, was drawing to its close. It chanced also that the Abbot was at this time entertaining some ecclesiastical dignitaries from without. But before I proceed I should perhaps explain the mysteries of the titles with which the dignitaries of the Orthodox Church are blessed. Patriarchs and the Archbishop of Cyprus are *Μακαριώτατοι*, Beatitudes, only the Œcumenical Patriarch being *Παναγιότης*, an All-Holiness. Other Archbishops and Metropolitans are *Πανιερώτατοι*, All-Sacred; Suffragans merely *Ιερώτατοι*, Sacred, or *Θεοφιλέστατοι*, Beloved of God. Abbots and Archimandrites are *Πανοσιολογιώτατοι*, All-Saintly-and-Erudite; but, when an Abbot can neither read nor write, when he can only put his thumb to the monastic documents, it is considered more tactful to drop the *Λογιώτατος*, Most-Erudite, and to call him '*Πανοσιώτατε*' *tout court*. Our Abbot, worthy man, assuredly *Πανοσιολογιώτατος*, had prepared for his guests as good a spread as season and place allowed. Our portion was tinned lobster and a fowl, that of the fasters black olives, radishes and a dish of lentils and split peas. *Parmi les convives*, as the French society journals say, we remarked the coadjutor Bishop of Trikkala, the Abbot of Metéoron, a monk of Pentelicus, a stray Archimandrite and the Abbot our host; while we ate, one of the monks of Barlaam, not privileged to be of the diners, sat on a divan by the wall and in melancholy tones read exhortations from some ancient book of devotion. Occasionally, too, as the meal progressed and the sour red wine



## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

of northern Greece was passed round the table, the Abbot and his friends would solemnly chant a hymn or psalm. Although the fare was simple, it did not lack in quantity, and we sat at table a prodigious time, talking of many things with these excellent monks, whom we found to be, after all, very human. Indeed, it seemed to me that with every circuit of the bottle the ecclesiastical character of their songs was becoming less apparent. We had sat down at seven; at ten, the dinnerless monk abandoned in despair his homilies from the Early Fathers; at eleven, there being no indication that the party was likely to break up, I produced a bottle of rum which we had brought from Athens to keep out the rigorous Thessalian cold. The Abbot poured it out in tumblers and in an instant the All-Sacred, the All-Saintly and the All-Prudite were roaring Klephtic ballads<sup>1</sup> at the tops of their voices—but not for long. Men cannot fast for forty days and then drink rum with impunity.

Of the sequel, of the *mal de mer* endured by our friends, in strict hierarchical order, from these giddy heights overhanging the plain I forbear to speak. We left betimes in the morning, before the place was astir, unwilling by delay to become involved in the awful penances which were the fate, no doubt, of our unhappy boon companions.

<sup>1</sup> The Klephts were Greek brigands who played a prominent political rôle as open rebels against the Ottoman Government in the Greek War of Independence. Their ballads, vigorous and natural, are the most attractive products of modern Greek literature, but there is nothing ecclesiastical about them.

## CHAPTER II

### RHODES

WE now set our faces towards Mount Athos,<sup>1</sup> a republic of monks which excludes from its territory not only women and the females of all beasts but even male visitors not provided with letters from the Patriarch of Constantinople or from the official representatives of the monks in Salonika. We obtained our permit in Salonika and, after three days spent in that city of glorious Byzantine basilicas, embarked for Athos in a Russian pilgrim ship. The S.S. *Axon* had first to pick up a cargo of tobacco at the port of Kavalla, which lies to the east of Mount Athos; then she doubled back to deposit us, her only passengers, at the Holy Mountain and to take from it home to Odessa a hundred and fifty Russian pilgrims.

The old town of Kavalla, walled and crowned with a citadel, stands, like Monaco, upon a high promontory. It is connected with the new town (also of a respectable age), which is spread over the hills behind it, by a long two-storied aqueduct built in the Middle Ages by the Genoese. The great Mohammed Ali, the founder of the present dynasty of Egypt, was a native of Kavalla and, as a thank-offering for the favours which Allah had showered upon him, erected the large alms-house which from

<sup>1</sup> Described in a later chapter.

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

the highest part of the old town looks across the Gulf of Kavalla to the well-timbered isle of Thasos. And the connexion between these two, between Thasos and the alms-house, is curious. In 1807 Mohammed Ali, having made his peace with Sultan Mahmud II., received from him in perpetuity the revenues of Thasos (except the customs and the military exemption tax), to be applied to any charitable purpose which the Pasha of Egypt might select. He chose, naturally, his own foundation; and from that time until the early years of the twentieth century the island was administered for the benefit of this establishment by an Egyptian Controller of *Evqaf*,<sup>1</sup> although almost within swimming distance of the mainland of Turkey. An attempt then made by the Egyptian Mudir to increase certain dues provoked disturbances which led to the termination of the Egyptian administration, and the island reverted to Turkey, at first as a part of the vilayet of Salonika, later as a *sanjaq* or *mutesarriflik* under the immediate jurisdiction of Constantinople.

Communication between Mount Athos and the outside world is neither frequent nor good. We had therefore to make the best of an indifferent Greek cattle-ship, which, fourteen hours after our departure from Daphne, the little port of the Holy Mountain, set us down at Chanaq Qalesi at the Asiatic entrance to the Dardanelles. They were fourteen hours heavy with discomfort. It was bitterly cold, it was stormy, and our cargo of sheep not only filled both decks but overflowed into the saloon, to encounter the stony gaze of the icon of

<sup>1</sup> Moslem ecclesiastical property and pious foundations.

## RHODES

S. Nicholas which in all Greek and Russian ships presides over that apartment. As we skirted the south coast of Imbros the rain swept down in torrents, and, when again we got into open sea, the storm had become a gale. Finally, we made the Dardanelles, but, arriving too late to be given pratique, were compelled to spend another night on board.

Early the next morning we transferred ourselves and our baggage on shore and, after satisfying a bevy of functionaries on the wharf that our *tezkerés*<sup>1</sup> were all that they should be, determined to set out in search of such shipping agents as Chanaq Qalesi might boast, anxious to prosecute without delay the journey to our next objective, Rhodes. But there was no need for us to trouble; Mohammed was already hastening to the mountain. Like wild-fire the news of our arrival and destination had spread among those citizens of Chanaq who had an eye to business (that is to say, the entire population, which, as in other Turkish ports, consists largely of Jews) and, hardly had we installed ourselves in a coffee-shop to prepare for the morning's work when by each of the doors of the establishment there entered, simultaneously, the agent of a steamship company. And then the fun began. With no unseemly haste, with that true oriental courtesy which can so well disguise sentiments of a very different nature, these two men of enterprise took it in turns to sit at our table, pass the time of day and, without quite knowing what price the other had suggested, to underbid him in the matter

<sup>1</sup> A local Turkish passport, required to travel from one province of the Ottoman Empire to another.

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

of fares. One was a dapper little Russian Jew, born in Constantinople and living under the protection of a British passport. This much he vouchsafed in the preliminaries to actual business. The other was a lanky, fire-eating Greek with carrotty hair and a fierce moustache, a plausible manner and a shifty eye. They had heard, they said, that we wanted to go to Rhodes. By a providential coincidence each had a steamer leaving that very day for Rhodes, *via* Smyrna, and would esteem it an honour as well as an unexpected piece of good fortune to be allowed to convey us thither.

Now in the course of another journey, some four years previously, I had spent a few days in Smyrna and had even sampled a portion of the Aidin railway; but agreeable as was the former and charming the country traversed by the latter, with its plains of waving asphodel and its stork-inhabited ruins, I was anxious on the present occasion to hasten to pastures new. This aspect of the situation was carefully explained, and both gentlemen assured us, separately and in turn, that their ships would stop at Smyrna for two hours at the utmost and would then make with all despatch for Rhodes. Much time was now spent and much coffee consumed while the subject of fares was again discussed in all its bearings. To each agent, with sublime impartiality, we lauded his rival's ship, and this, I think, with considerable success; but bed-rock was touched when the Russian, who had the bigger vessel, declared that he could go no lower than ninety francs a head while the Greek was prepared, nay eager, to do the job for sixty-five. And well he might. Won by the plausible manner and in

## RHODES

spite of the shifty eye, we took our passages with him and, the business of the day being concluded, spent the remainder of the morning in the company of a fat Jew, in theory being shown the sights of the town, in practice having to listen to a detailed narrative of his friendship with the late Professor Schliemann and of their joint labours at Troy.

We left Chanaq in the afternoon and all unsuspecting steamed past Tenedos's double peak and watched the sun set behind vine-clad Mytilene. But on the morrow a rude awakening was ours. As we moved along the hilly shores between which the Gulf of Smyrna eats its way for thirty miles into the land, the captain informed us, with an *aplomb* which we could but admire, that his next port of call after Smyrna would be the Piræus, and that Rhodes never had been, and was never likely to be included in his itinerary. Too amazed at the effrontery of our carrotty friend at Chanaq to make, there and then, a suitable and effective protest, we landed at Smyrna like lambs; but at the custom-house a successful brush with the censor, who interrupted the suppression of a telegram announcing that Montenegro had broken off relations with the Vatican in order to point out the iniquity of importing into Turkey so seditious a work as a treatise on Crusading castles, restored our morale sufficiently to enable us to make a perfectly useless scene at the company's offices. By the time we had finished, the Russian ship arrived; and nothing now remained but the humiliating task of negotiating with her once more and, our overtures being received without undue display of triumph, to embark in her

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the same evening, the poorer in gold, the richer in experience.

Our new vessel was a pilgrim ship conveying a batch of *muzhiks* from Odessa to the Holy Land and, throughout the following day and doubtless during every day of their journey, these stolid, simple, faithful folk sat in the steerage, singing hymns in harmony and doing kind actions to each other's heads, otherwise impassive and quite oblivious of the ever changing scenery through which we were threading our way. It was a charming maze of capes and small islands, full of unexpected developments and full of memories of modern history's most romantic period. For, in passing between Kalymnos and the Carian shore, we entered the former dominions of the great Order which has left an indelible mark on this corner of the world, that Order whose members, variously known as Hospitallers, Knights of S. John, Knights of Rhodes and Knights of Malta, after continuing the struggle which had been abandoned by the Crusaders and after keeping back for generations the flowing tide of Islam, slowly and reluctantly receded westward until, having lost everything except a sovereignty little more than nominal, they now spend a placid and enfeebled old age under their Grandmaster in Rome, contemplating an irretrievable past when they were both the pride and the glory of Europe. Kalymnos was theirs, a dependency of Rhodes; theirs, too, the castle of Budrun which they constructed of the tomb of Mausolus and which we could see, gleaming in the sunlight, on the promontory of Halicarnassus. Then came Pserimos and Kos, Nisyros and Syme

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(*un ottimo Pascolo di Capre*, says Coronelli) and, late at night, its ramparts outlined against the starry sky, Rhodes itself, Rhodes, last citadel of militant Christendom in the East, Rhodes whose defence against the Turks was as much the wonder of the world as had ever been its Colossus.

The Rhodes of these days, unchanged except in its possessors from the Rhodes of those, recalls with startling vividness the era of the Knights. Its fortifications, one of the noblest monuments which mediæval military art has ever produced, certainly the best preserved, the most extensive of all that survive, enclose what has been said to be the most perfect specimen extant of a fifteenth century French town, complete in every detail. Elsewhere may be seen, as at Ávila and Aigues Mortes, massive town-walls or, as in Oxford, a street largely mediæval; but nowhere can be matched this stupendous cincture of curtain, gate and tower, setting a town which for close on four centuries has suffered no alteration, a town of Gothic houses whose turrets and mullions, gargoyles and emblazoned façades, are the fine flower of flamboyant domestic architecture. And yet here is something more than an unrivalled combination of western art, military and domestic, surviving the ages in almost unrivalled perfection. Here are a sea and sky of Mediterranean blue, a golden-brown colour to the walls which is sometimes seen in Sicilian buildings but never in those of France, a scattering of date-palms through the open spaces of the Burgh and through the pretty suburbs behind it, and the picturesquely varied population of a Turkish town, all helping to create the unique and manifold charm

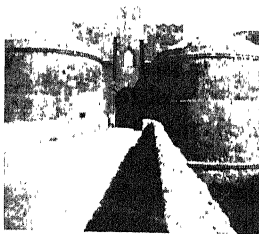


## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

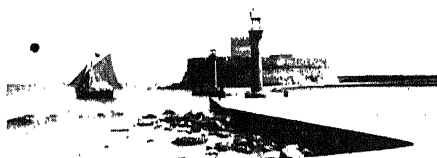
possessed by the remnants of the Latin East. As salt brings out the flavour of meat, so does colour reveal the full beauty of a building; and Rhodes can prove, as the most fastidious purist will allow, that the Gothic church and the Gothic mansion which are admirable in the cold lights of Northern France or England are transformed into something far more wonderful in the golden haze of the Archipelago.

The prettiest sight in Rhodes is its harbour, facing Makri on the Karamanian coast, once also a stronghold of the Order. Two moles run out from the land, the one forming the outer boundary of the Grand Harbour, the other separating it on its northern side from the Mandraki, a subsidiary harbour used by the Knights for their lesser galleys. Along both moles is planted a row of the windmills which are one of the most characteristic features of the island, the very windmills which ground the corn in the days of the Order; and both terminate in strongly fortified watch-towers, the northern one in S. Nicholas's Tower, perhaps the site of the Colossus, the eastern one in the Tower of the Windmills. At the base of S. Nicholas's mole a shorter spit, running at right angles to it, partially closes the entrance of the Grand Harbour; here in former days stood Naillac's Tower, once the greatest of all the towers of Rhodes but now gone but for its foundations. Between this spot and the base of the mole of the Windmills' Tower the walls of Castile line the Grand Harbour with a semicircle of solid masonry, and there are few more delightful walks in the fortress than along the road which runs between these and the water's edge. To your right,

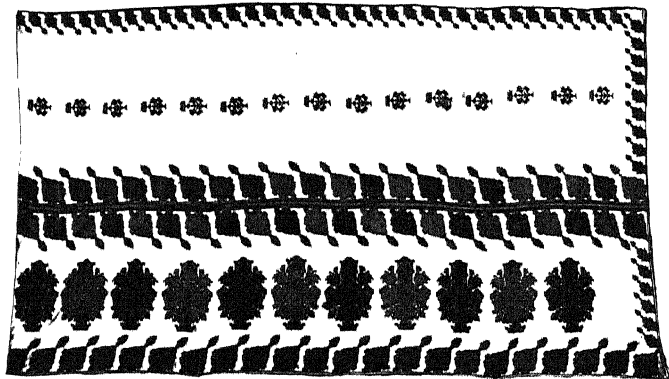
PLATE IV



RHODES: GATE OF AMBOISE.



RHODES: ENTRANCE TO HARBOUR.



A DIVAN-COVER OF RHODIAN EMBROIDERY IN THE AUTHOR'S POSSESSION.

*To face page 40.*



## RHODES

as you enter the road from the Sea Gate, stretches the crenellated crescent of stone, guarding the town which lies behind it and broken in the middle by the towers of S. Katharine's Gate; to your left its outlines are reflected in the still waters of the harbour, which looks as if at any moment it might once again be filled with the galleys of the Knights, gaily decked for a water pageant or else mustering for some raid on which the banner of the Order, on a field gules a plain cross argent, would be borne victorious against the Turks. But as Rhodes was rarely attacked from the sea side, the walls of the harbour, if the more picturesque, were inferior in strategical importance to those which defended the land side of the town; hence they were entrusted to the care of the smallest of the eight Nations or "Langues" of which the Order was composed during its occupation of the island. These were, in the order of precedence, the Langues of Provence, Auvergne, France, Italy, Aragon, England, Germany and Castile, and to each Langue was committed the defence of a certain section of the fortifications. At Naillac's Tower begin the walls of France and then follow, in succession and completing the circuit, those of Germany, Auvergne, Aragon, England, Provence and, lastly, those of Italy, ending at the mole of the Windmills, where those of Castile begin. On the land side three gates, the Gates of Amboise, S. George and S. John, give issue from the city by bridges which cross the wide ditch cut with incalculable labour in the rock along the whole length of the defences. But for these, there is no interruption to the chain of wall and bastion. A fourth gate, that of S. Athanasius, was

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

closed after the siege of 1480 by Cardinal d'Aubusson, fifteenth of the Rhodian Grandmasters.

The city itself consists of two parts : the smaller, known as the Collachium, contained the principal buildings of the Order, the Hospital, the conventual Church, the Grandmaster's palace and the *Anberges* of the several Langues ; and the Knights, who lived a collegiate life, were compelled by the rules of the Order to dwell within it. Separated by a wall from the Collachium was the Burgh, inhabited by the merchants and by the subjects of the Order. But after the Turkish conquest all foreigners except Jews were expelled from both Burgh and Collachium, and to the time of our visit only Turks and Jews could live in the city. Thus, when the bugles blew at sunset and the Turkish sentries closed the gates with as much precision as if Rhodes were still being beleaguered, all *rayahs* and strangers perforce withdrew and returned to their dwellings outside the walls, in the suburbs of Neomara and Mara. The Jews were privileged, it is said, because one of their race, resident in the town during its final siege by the Turks, is supposed to have aided in his betrayal Andrea d'Amaral, then "Pillar," or Head, of the Langue of Castile and *ex officio* Grand Chancellor of the Order. On the death of Grandmaster del Carretto in 1521, d'Amaral was a candidate for the Grandmagistracy ; but the Order chose Villiers de l'Isle Adam and in the following year Suleiman the Magnificent began the investment of the town, determined at last to make an end of the power which had been for so long a thorn in the side of the Ottoman Empire. Previous attempts had taught the Turks that this would be no easy matter, and

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they had brought an army of a hundred and fifty thousand men to take the city, which was being defended by six hundred Knights, four thousand five hundred mercenaries and the Greek inhabitants, who, preferring even the Latins to the Turks, displayed throughout the greatest loyalty to the Order. For several months the siege continued. Despite great efforts and a heavy loss of life on the part of the Turks, the city held out and the Knights, led by their heroic Grandmaster, determined to sell Rhodes dearly. But the well-placed artillery of the besiegers gradually reduced the numbers of the garrison while time diminished their supplies. On the 24th September the Turks succeeded, after several vain assaults, in making a breach in the walls of Aragon but, after holding the wall for three hours, were obliged to retire and lost on that day no fewer than 15,000 men. At this stage it is said that the Sultan, deceived by their untiring resistance as to the extent of the Knights' resources, was so discouraged that he contemplated raising the siege when d'Amaral, embittered by his disappointment and jealous of l'Isle Adam, revealed to him, by messages shot on arrows into the Turkish lines, the terrible straits of the besieged. At least, such was the evidence given against him by his valet and by a Greek priest, and on it he was condemned and executed by a desperate garrison which could afford to take no risks. After that, there was no more hope, yet the nearer appeared the triumph of the Turks, the more spirited became the resistance. On the 10th October the Turks seized the bastion of Aragon but with a mighty effort the defenders hastily threw up a new wall behind the now con-

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

quered fort; on the 29th November, while the bells of S. John's Church pealed and the Greek Archbishop urged his people to the walls, a last rally of soldiers and citizens, men and women, kept off for a few more days the inevitable fall. On the 22nd December the agony was at an end; P'Isle Adam surrendered and Suleiman rode into the city over the bodies of the forty thousand Turks who had been its price. "Toute-fois," remarks Friar André Thevet in a pleasant work intituled *Cosmographie de Levant*, "il usa d'une grande modestie envers le Seigneur Grandmaistre & envers tous les habitans du lieu, les laissant aller bagues sauues, avec inhibitions & defenses à ses gens de ne leur faire aucun empesche ny deplaisir." On the 1st January, 1523, the galleys of the Order assembled for the last time in the harbour to which they had so often returned laden with Turkish booty. The Grandmaster, with those who remained of the Knights and with some five thousand of the inhabitants, embarked and sailed away; and thus, with the honours of war, departed out of Rhodes the Order which had done much in the name of religion that would scarce do religion credit but which had won, by gallantry that atoned for not a little, the admiration of Christians and the respect of the Turks.

In 1856 the conventual Church of S. John, which stood in the Collachium near the Grandmaster's palace, was struck by lightning. A terrific explosion ensued, in which the church and its adjoining buildings were annihilated and more than eight hundred people were killed. The lightning had ignited a quantity of gunpowder which lay in the vaults of the church, its presence unknown until

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revealed by the disaster. The question as to the origin of the gunpowder has never yet been solved, although many theories have been put forward. The Rhodians believe, however, that it was hidden there by none other than d'Amaral, who, not content with betraying his fellow Knights to the Sultan, endeavoured still farther to cripple their resources by concealing their ammunition. Whether this suspicion is true or not will probably never be proved; but it is not impossible that news of a shortage of powder had reached d'Amaral's judges when they ordered him to be beheaded and quartered and a portion of his body to be exposed on every bastion.

As the greatness of Portugal in former days was due to a succession of able kings, so did the Order owe to its Grandmasters much of its undoubted success. The names of Hélión de Villeneuve, Dieudonné de Gozon, "*extincto draconis*," Philibert de Naillac, Pierre Cardinal d'Aubusson, Emery d'Amboise and Philippe Villiers de l'Isle Adam are pre-eminent among those of many other famous men who ruled in Rhodes; and to this day shields of marble, bearing their arms beside those of the Order, may be seen in many places on the walls which they raised to protect it. Their arms and those of others likewise adorn the façades of the *Auberges* in the Street of the Knights, except where they have been displaced by the overhanging balconies of lattice work which the Turks call *shahnishin*, "the place for the king to sit." Yet, however much the addition of these may be deplored by the visitor, he has no right to blame the poor Turks who now own houses where once

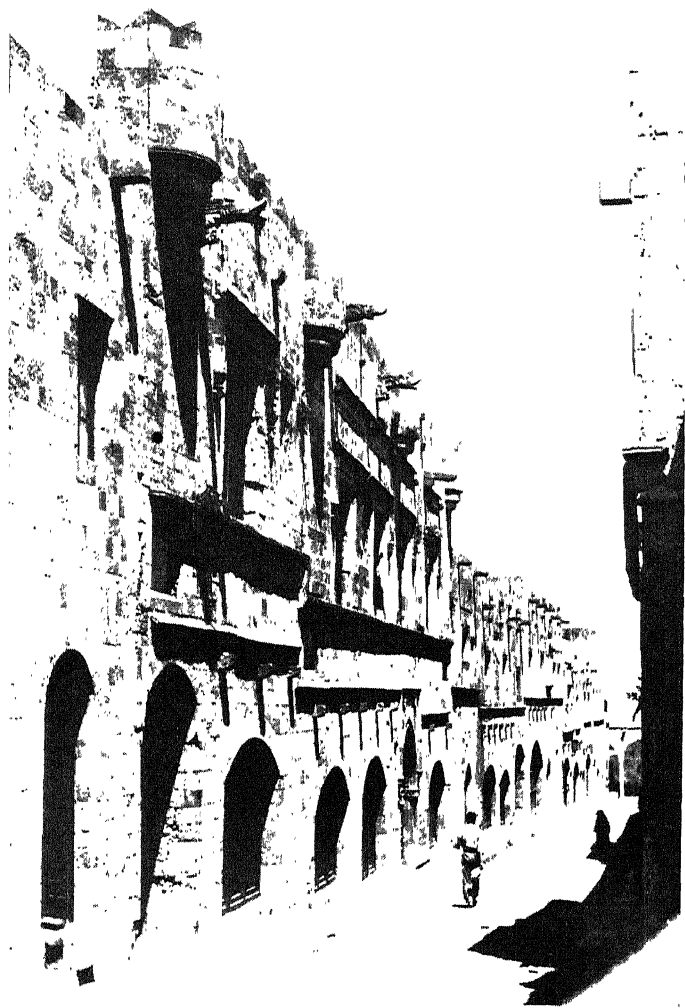


## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

dwelt the chivalry of Europe for adapting them as far as possible to their requirements. Unlike Napoleon's troops in the Peninsula, the Turks are no vandals; they rarely, if ever, destroy for the sake of destruction only, and to this fact we owe the survival of many a splendid basilica, of many a priceless mosaic. Possibly they do not consider it worth the trouble. But they certainly do not understand the spirit in which western races regard works of art nor have they themselves any appreciation of them. They only consider the practical aspect of the question and, if the defacement or the preservation of some ancient building adds in any way to their convenience, they do not hesitate either to deface or to preserve. Otherwise they merely leave it alone, wondering mildly at the fascination which the *antika* exercises over the stranger.

Nevertheless, there have flourished in Rhodes two arts, although now they flourish no longer. The embroideries with which the peasantry of the island adorned their skirts, their curtains and their bedspreads are among the most attractive of those to be met with in the Ægean, where nearly every island produced embroideries, each of a characteristic type. The pattern of the Rhodian work is most original: it consists of lozenges of the richest colour, alternately red and bluish green, bordering and in rows upon a base of home-spun cotton. The rural population of Rhodes is predominantly Greek, as in all the Archipelago, so that no credit can on this account be given to the Turks; at Lindos, however, in the south-eastern part of the island, where a lofty castle and well preserved Gothic

PLATE V



RHODES : THE STREET OF THE KNIGHTS.

*To face page 46.*



## RHODES

houses remain of the time of the Knights, was made much of the beautiful class of Turkish pottery commonly known as Rhodian. Tradition ascribes the origin of the Lindos kilns, some of which may still be seen, to the capture by the galleys of the Order, in the course of one of their raids, of a large Turkish ship having on board some Persian or Damascene potters. Wishing to utilize the skill of their prisoners the Knights established them at Lindos, where the sand was particularly suitable for glazing; and there the potters and their successors continued to work under the Turkish domination.

The most noticeable characteristic of Rhodian pottery is a peculiar red pigment, coralline in colour and prepared from the red oxide of iron, which is applied so thickly as to stand out in relief. Its designs are mainly the favourite flowers of the Turks, roses, carnations, hyacinths and tulips, interlacing on a ground of faint and running green; and so much favour did it find in Europe that although from the sixteenth to the beginning of the eighteenth century there was a goodly output from Lindos of tiles, jugs and dishes, the island is now all but denuded of specimens of its ware. Only in the Mosque of Rejeb Pasha, also called the Eski-Yeni Jami (the Old-New Mosque), are there eight panels of perfect tiles, carefully guarded by its Imâms; and the collector will seek for them in vain among the *antikajis* of Rhodes.

The climate of Rhodes is delightful, its vegetation rich and pleasant, and for this reason, no doubt, a kindly Government was wont to select it as the place of banishment for that type of exile which seems to be peculiar to the Ottoman and Celestial Empires,

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

for the individual who has temporarily incurred its displeasure but who by a subsequent turn of fortune will probably be restored to favour. The town simply teemed with these interesting and not altogether unfortunate people. There was a host of ample Pashas whose friends at headquarters were for the moment out of office, an Armenian doctor who had failed to cure an Imperial Prince and a mysterious Sheikh from the Yemen who excited much attention owing to the fact that, in the manner of certain Persians, he dyed his beard a brilliant scarlet. Even the Vali (Rhodes is the capital of the vilayet of the Archipelago) was in dignified exile, a phenomenon by no means uncommon in the days of Abdul Hamid. In former times the Governorship of the Archipelago was held *ex officio* by the Qapitan Pasha,<sup>1</sup> the Admiralissimo of Turkey, and Rhodes was still, at the time of our visit, a naval station of a certain importance on paper. But the

<sup>1</sup> While on the subject of the Qapitan Pasha I cannot refrain from quoting that prudent traveller Henry Blount, who in the course of a journey into the Levant touched at Rhodes in 1634 :

“ Upon my first landing (at Rhodes) I had espyed among divers very *honourable Sepultures*, one more brave than the rest, and new; I enquired whose it was; a *Turke* not knowing whence I was, told me it was the *Captaine Basha*, slaine the yeare before by two *English Ships*; and therewith gave such a Language of our *Nation*, and threatening to all whom they should light upon, as made me upon all demands professe my selfe a *Scotchman*, which being a name unknowne to them, saved mee, nor did I suppose it any quitting of my Countrey, but rather a *retreat* from one corner to the other; and when they required more in particular, I intending my owne *safetie* more than their *instruction*, answered the truth both of my *King*, and *Country*, but in the ould *Greeke*, and *Latine* titles, which was as darke to them as a discourse of *Isis*, and (*Osyris*). ”

## RHODES

Senior Naval Officer was more renowned as an equestrian than as a seaman nor would his flotilla, had it ever gone to sea, have offered him much opportunity to test its or his own capacity. I forbear to describe his ships lest someone, confronting me with a Turkish Navy List, call me a liar; but those who knew Turkey and its navy under the old *régime* will agree that in the realm of romance that work has rarely been surpassed.

Many are the tales which are told of the Turkish navy in its unregenerate days.

An Ottoman man-of-war was once ordered at very short notice to demonstrate against certain insurgents.

"Start in half an hour," said someone at the Ministry of Marine to the Commanding Officer.

"Pardon, Excellency, we cannot."

"Fellow, why not?"

"Excellency, there is no rudder."

"Imbecile, start at once; the rudder shall be sent on by post."

A Turkish Admiral ordered his squadron to proceed on a cruise.

"Where to?" his staff inquired.

"There seems to be plenty of room," replied the Admiral, glancing at the chart; "let us go straight ahead."

They did, and the ships ran ashore on the north coast of Africa.

Either the same or another squadron was once sent to visit Malta but, whether it was owing to the inadequacy of the charts or to that of the navigators, the Admiral failed to make a landfall.

After cruising vainly about for some days he

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

abandoned the quest and blandly reported to the Ministry of Marine: "*Malta yok*—there is no Malta."

A British Admiral who was reorganizing the Ottoman Navy once announced that on the following day he proposed to inspect a rather out-of-date Turkish battleship which was moored to the mud-flats of the Golden Horn.

It being his first visit, every one was determined to spare no pains to make the inspection a success. Decks were scrubbed, brasswork was polished, officers repaired their uniforms, ratings advanced the date of their weekly shave. Filled with just pride they awaited the Admiral, who appeared to be greatly impressed with what he saw on deck. But, as he was proceeding to go below, the Captain sought politely to dissuade him. He called attention to objects as yet unobserved on deck and advanced many reasons why the Admiral should not fatigue himself in the ship's lower regions. But the Admiral was not to be deterred and the Turk courteously but with fading smile led the way—to a flourishing kitchen-garden. For so many years had the ship remained fast to her moorings that her bottom had become rotten, and the mud had filtered through innumerable holes, making a respectable bed of soil. This was no reason, in those days, for removing the ship from the active list and it was sensibly decided to make the best of a bad business. Tomatoes, cucumbers and that unromantic but succulent vegetable so beloved of the Turk, the pumpkin, were growing in abundance; and, although the Admiral could scarcely commend the veteran's seaworthiness, I have no doubt that he

## RHODES

was able, when he recovered from his astonishment, to praise the adaptability of the ship's company.

Many years ago, before her engines had been sold by her Captain to the local flour-mill, the gunboat at Rhodes was performing some evolutions in the harbour when the steering gear developed a defect and the vessel made straight for the mole. The order was given to reverse engines but the chief engineer called up laconically: "*makina qizdi*," a delightful phrase somewhat difficult to translate but meaning that the engines had got excited and angry and would not consent to stop. So she ran on to the mole, whence she was hauled off by the delighted population.

A new Admiral was appointed to the command of the Mediterranean squadron. He was rowed off to his flagship, installed himself in the after cabin and went to sleep in an armchair which he caused to be carried on to the sternwalk.

Presently he awoke and said :

" Full speed ahead, by Allah ! "

So presently the propeller began to revolve and, as it had not moved since the ship was sold to the Turks, at more than cost price, by a Power which had no farther use for her, it made a fearful din.

" Allah ! " cried the Admiral, " what in the name of the Prophet is this uproar ? "

" The propeller, O Excellency."

" Stop it, then."

" But the ship will stop, O Excellency."

" Then take the damned thing off," bellowed the Admiral, " and put it on the other end."

The day before we left Rhodes the Greeks celebrated their New Year's Eve. Little bands of



## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

children perambulated the Greek *faubourgs*, singing carols outside the houses and receiving in return gifts of money or of food. Were any of them aware, I wonder, as they did so, how closely they were following in the footsteps of their Dorian ancestors? In ancient times it was the custom in Rhodes, at the approach of spring, for boys to carry a swallow from house to house, singing :

ἦλθ', ἦλθε χελιδὼν  
καλὰς ὥρας ἄγουσα,  
καλοὺς ἐνιαυτούς,  
ἐπὶ γαστέρα λευκά,  
ἐπὶ νῶτα μέλαινα.

The swallow's come, winging  
His way to us here !  
Fair hours is he bringing,  
And a happy new year !  
White and black  
Are his belly and back.

Then came the request :

παλάθαν σὺ προκίκλει  
ἐκ πίονος οἴκου  
οἴνου τε δέπαστρον  
τυροῦ τε κάλυστρον  
καὶ πύρνα  
χελιδὼν καὶ λεχιθίταν  
οὐκ ἀπωθεῖται. πότερ' ἀπίωμες ἢ λαβώμεθα ;  
εἰ μὲν τι δώσεις·

Give him welcome once more,  
With figs from your store,  
With wine in its flasket,  
And cheese in its basket,  
And eggs,—ay, and wheat if we ask it.  
Shall we go or receive? yes, we'll go if you'll give;

## RHODES

but if the master of the house was close-fisted,

εἰ δὲ μή, οὐκ ἔάσομεν,  
ἢ τὰν θύραν φέρωμες ἢ θοῦπέρθυρον  
ἢ τὰν γυναῖκα τὰν ἔσω καθημέναν  
μικρὰ μὲν ἔστι, ῥαδίως νιν οἴσομες.

But, if you refuse us, we never will leave.  
We'll tear up the door,  
And the lintel and floor;  
And your wife, if you still demur—  
She is little and light—we will come to-night  
And run away e'en with her.

If, however, he gave freely,

ἂν δὴ φέρῃς τι,  
μέγα δὴ τι φέροιο.

But if you will grant  
The presents we want,  
Great good shall come of it,  
And plenty of profit!

So,

ἄνοιγ' ἄνοιγε τὰν θύραν χελιδόνι·  
οὐ γὰρ γέροντές ἐσμεν, ἀλλὰ παιδιά.

Come, throw open free  
Your doors to the swallow!  
Your children are we,  
Not old beggars, who follow.<sup>1</sup>

In such things the world has changed but little and the same feast often appears in a variety of guises. The children who sang carols in honour of the Orthodox New Year obeyed the same impulse as did the little rascals with the swallow; the announcement was followed by the same rejoicings,

<sup>1</sup> The song is quoted in Athenæus, viii., 60, and has been charmingly set to music by A. M. Goodhart. I have borrowed the translation of E. B. C.

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

doubtless, then as now. New Year's Day at Rhodes was a day of piety and conviviality. In the morning everyone went to church, attired in their best; after the liturgy they repaired home to prolonged family banquets. Suddenly, at half past two in the afternoon, the ancient cannon on the ramparts boomed. It was ten days to the minute since the new moon had been discerned in the sky, and the Turkish gunners who had been standing by, watch in hand, announced with a salute the advent of Qurban Bairam. The two feasts fell together and the Turks, no less than the Christians, prepared due celebrations; every Turkish household killed a sheep whose fleece had been dyed vermillion in remembrance of Abraham's uncompleted sacrifice.

At night, as we steamed out of the harbour and looked back at the town, we beheld a sight of unwonted loveliness. The domes of the mosques and the balconies of the minarets were garlanded with rows of little lamps, and their concentric circles of light revealed the outlines of the buildings with enchanting and fitful glimmer. In every quarter their flickering gleam shone faintly out of the darkness, and even so the crescent moon illumined, living emblem of its masters, the defences of the citadel. As the ship moved onward, windmills, towers and cupolas, vaguely suggested, passed slowly out of sight, and the last view we had of them was perhaps the most beautiful of all. Not in the broad light of day but in fairy-like obscurity, *per speculum in aenigmate*, did we bid farewell to the mighty fortress, to

“ Rhodes, des Ottomans ce redoutable écuil,  
De tous ses défenseurs devenu le cerceuil.”

## CHAPTER III

### “A SEAPORT IN CYPRUS”

IF Shakespeare was nodding when he caused Perdita to be put ashore on the coasts of Bohemia, not so when he laid in “a seaport in Cyprus” the scene of the tragedy of *Othello*. For Famagusta, the seaport in question, had still, when Shakespeare wrote, some measure of its earlier glamour. Not quite forgotten were the days when it rivalled Genoa and Venice in the extent of its trade, in the activity of its harbour, in the wealth of its merchants, in the sumptuousness of its buildings; fresh in the public memory was its gallant, if fruitless defence against the Turks. Nor was there anything unduly fanciful in the transition from the Venetian Moro, Governor of Cyprus, to the Moor of Venice, invested with the same office. Had not the noble house of Moro given three Governors to Cyprus in the eighty-two years of the Venetian Occupation, Christopher, Sebastian and John, to say nothing of a host of lesser officials? Was not its canting coat of three mulberries sable (Moro means both mulberry tree and Moor) well known in Venice and wherever Venice held sway?

What sort of place, then, is the town where Shakespeare placed the greatest of his tragedies; what has been its history; what are its other claims to fame, its present situation?

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

Famagusta's predecessor as the eastern capital and port of Cyprus was Salamis, the city of Teucer, whose ruins, extensive but dilapidated, lie in a pretty pine forest some six miles to the north. The Apostles Paul and Barnabas landed at Salamis on their missionary journey to Cyprus and in Salamis, his native town, Barnabas was subsequently martyred. In the seventh century Salamis was destroyed by earthquakes and a series of Arab invasions, and its population migrated to the neighbouring Arsinoë, which had been built by Ptolemy Philadelphus, the patron of Theocritus, in honour of his sister. In due course Arsinoë became to the Greeks Ammóchostos (from ἄμμος-χώνω, "hidden in the sand"), a name which the Franks softened into the more euphonious Famagusta.

It was the fall of Acre, the last outpost of the Crusading Kingdom of Jerusalem, in 1291 which made of Famagusta for the ensuing century the busiest mart of the eastern Mediterranean. If Rhodes continued the military traditions of the Crusades, their commercial heritage fell to Famagusta, whose wealth and luxury astonished visitors to Cyprus and became for a while proverbial in Europe. While the French nobility of the Holy Land, the families of Montfort, of Ibelin, of Dampierre and the rest, took refuge in Nicosia at the Court of their compatriots, the Lusignan Kings of Cyprus, now become, too, by inheritance titular Kings of the vanished Kingdom of Jerusalem, the merchants and bankers of the great Italian maritime cities, Venice, Genoa, Pisa, Amalfi, transferred to the only harbour of Cyprus, which was Famagusta, the commercial establishments which they had

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dotted along the Syrian coast. With these additions to its resources Cyprus soon unfolded a tale of martial exploits and fabulous riches, an efflorescence of Frankish art and letters on the rich Levantine soil. The island is distant only sixty miles from the Syrian coast, forty from that of Anatolia, two hundred and sixty from Egypt. Thus it faced within easy reach the ports at which ended the great eastern trade-routes, ports such as Mersina and Alexandretta, Latakia, Tripoli and Beirut, Haifa and Jaffa, Gaza and Alexandria. Moreover, its island immunity from land attacks relieved it of those cares which had weighed so heavily upon the Crusading states of the mainland. And while the Lusignan Kings and their prelates endowed Cyprus with cathedrals and churches in the purest style of the Ile-de-France, the merchant-princes of Famagusta filled the harbour with their galleys and the quays and wharves with the rare and varied merchandise of the Levant. Nor was Famagusta merely an emporium of wares in transit; it gave as good as it received or transmitted. Silks of the Karpass, lace of Levkara, even now one of the most popular products of the island, sugar from the canes of the royal manor of Kouklia beside the great temple of Paphian Aphrodite or from the tomb of Umm Haram near Larnaca, toothsome beccaficoes pickled in Commanderia wine, the wine itself, renowned throughout Europe as the potent *vin de Chypre*, salt from the salt-lakes of Larnaca and Limasol, the perfumery famous as *oiselets de Chypre*, barley from the Paphos hills, which is still in demand by the brewers of Kent, goldsmiths' work from Nicosia, pottery from Kyrenia, topaz crystals

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

from Polemi retailed under the name of “Paphos diamonds,” asbestos and indigo, caroub beans and cotton, a number of precious and medicinal oils—all these things were shipped westward from Famagusta together with the stuffs and spices of the remoter East. In his *Pisanella* d’Annunzio portrays Famagusta at the height of its prosperity in language so romantic, so richly coloured that the reader is scarcely aware to what an extent the play is a mine of historical and archæological research of meticulous accuracy. Well do the poet’s fervid throbbing lines convey the luxury and display and passion and riotous life of the greatest of the “échelles” of the Levant. Even his stage directions, from which the following quotation is taken, give a picture corroborated in every detail—though in less vivid language—by the chroniclers of the time of the scene on the quays of Famagusta at the beginning of the fourteenth century :

*“ Appare il molo di Famagosta con galee e navi accostate da poppa o da prua. . . .*

*“ Una via coperta riesce al molo per una fuga d’ archi che collega in tra di loro case costrutte al modo franco, a scaglie di embrici o aerate di larghi finestroni e coronate di terrazze secondo l’ uso di Siria. Vi si veggono fondaci, botteghe, portici di legno, scale diritte, passaggi a volta. Appajono, nelle logge delle nazioni ch’ han privilegi, i notari occupati a rogar atti pubblici in mezzo a una moltitudine di mercatanti, di padroni, di sensali, di cambiatori, di noleggianti, di scrivani, di sergenti, di maxxieri.*

*“ Sopra l’ intrico degli alberi, delle antenne, dei pennoni, di tutti gli attrezzi, si veggono i merli della Torre della Catena sfiammeggiar nel cielo della sera che s’ incurva sul mare di Femicia.*

*“ Armeni e Sirii, Nestoriani e Giacobiti, Samaritani e Giudei, Catalani e Arabi di Spagna, Siciliani e Napolitani, Fiorentini e Pisani, Veneziani e Genovesi, uomini di Linguadoca e di Provenza, tutti i navigatori del Mediterraneo, Levantini e Ponentini, si ragunano e si dimenano nel porto franco odorato di aromati e di spezie*

## “A SEAPORT IN CYPRUS”

*come un mercato d' Aleppo o di Damasco ; e v' hanno mercatanti che vengono dalle fiere di Sciampagna e altri che sono passati per la dogana di Ratisbona o di Norimberga. . . .*

*“ V' è legno d' aloè e di sandalo ; vi sono sacca di cannella e di cardamomo, di chiodi di garofano e di gengiòvo, d' indaco e di gomma dragante, di pepe e di zafferano ; avorio e oro filato cammuccà di Nicapur e nassito di Cina, raso di Zétani e siglato di Torisi, cambellotto tessuto con pelo di camelli bianchi e buon drappo di Doagio, boccaccino lustrato da tessitori del Nilo e tela fina di Rens, forzieri di cordovano ferrati e chiodati, cofani, astucci ; ori, gemme, perle, besanti, fiorini, ducati.”*

Truly Famagusta was then a cosmopolitan place. In addition to its native Greek-speaking population and the superimposed Frankish ruling class it contained, so it seemed, colonies of every race of the Near East. Countless tongues were spoken in its streets, from Norse to Persian, Georgian to Amharic. Gregorian, Jacobite and Nestorian shrines arose beside those of the Roman and Orthodox rites ; “ the blessed mutter of the mass ” could be heard daily in Greek and Latin, Syriac and Armenian. The wealthiest merchants of the city were then two Nestorians, the brothers Lachas, and the Cypriote chroniclers are full of tales of their lavish display. The King himself did not disdain to partake at times of their hospitality, and on such occasions the table was garnished with dishes filled with precious stones, into which the King's courtiers would dip without scruple. Great logs of sandalwood smouldered on the hearth while, with a refinement of luxury, the same aromatic fuel was used in the kitchen to give additional fragrance to the viands. On one occasion the King, after dining in the house of Lachas, was presented with thirty thousand gold ducats ; on another, one of the



## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

brothers, in an access of wild ostentation, pounded up in a mortar a carbuncle which he had bought at a fabulous price. Somewhat *rastaquouère*, perhaps, this vulgarization of Cleopatra's episode of the pearl, but typical of the time and the place. In the unbridled licence which now prevailed it almost seemed as if Aphrodite had returned to her island kingdom, rising once more from the foam to revive her Paphian and Idalian rites. Nobles hunted and jousted and dyed the tails of their dogs and horses scarlet; merchants of Famagusta gave, we are told, to their daughters on their marriage jewels more precious "que toutes les parures de la reine de France"; ladies of another category amassed fortunes which evoked the amazement of Western visitors. Even in the fourteenth century, a period by no means remarkable for the austerity of its morals, the laxity of life in Famagusta was regarded as approaching the scandalous and drew down upon its citizens the scathing denunciation of S. Bridget of Sweden. This mediæval Cassandra reserved, it is true, as became so devoted a servant of the Holy See, the worst of her prophecies for the godless Orthodox,<sup>1</sup> but included, none the less, all Famagusta in her disagreeable forecasts. Preaching in the great square of the impious city, in front of the cathedral, she foretold dire ruin upon the "new Gomorrha."

Whether it was due to the vigour of the Swedish Saint's invective or to the innate prudence of the Oriental mind, church-building was now undertaken with prodigious energy. Merchants would vow to

<sup>1</sup> Who retaliated by calling her schismatic and a ventriloquist—γύνη σχισματική καὶ ἐγγαστρίμυθος.

## “ A SEAPORT IN CYPRUS ”

honour their patron saints in this manner if a particularly valuable cargo was safely delivered; others built churches with one-third of the profits of a single journey; even retired courtesans, it was whispered, would endeavour to redeem a misspent youth by devoting to this unexceptionable purpose a portion of their savings. And so it is that Famagusta is richer in ecclesiastical buildings than most other towns of its size and could claim to possess three hundred and sixty-five churches, one for every day of the year. There were even several churches—of which all traces have now disappeared—outside the walls, and in one of these was preserved as late as 1700 one of the reputed wine-jars of the miracle of Cana. But not all the builders of Famagusta were actuated only by caution or the desire for self-rehabilitation. Nobler motives inspired Bishops Guy of Ibelin and Baldwin Lambert, who built the cathedral of S. Nicholas at their own expense, and the saintly Legate, Peter Thomas, whose Crusading zeal equalled that of his friend and master, King Peter.

From 1359 to 1369 the King of Cyprus was this Peter I., who may justly be called the greatest knight-errant the world has seen. Filled with Crusading ardour, Peter twice went the round of the Courts of Europe to collect men and money for the recovery of the Holy Land, and under him the Lusignan kingdom attained the height of its reputation. The ten years of the King's reign were filled with a variety of picturesque—and often tragic—incident, to which the Middle Ages afford no parallel. Vowed from the days before his accession, when he was still Count of Tripoli, to a perpetual

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

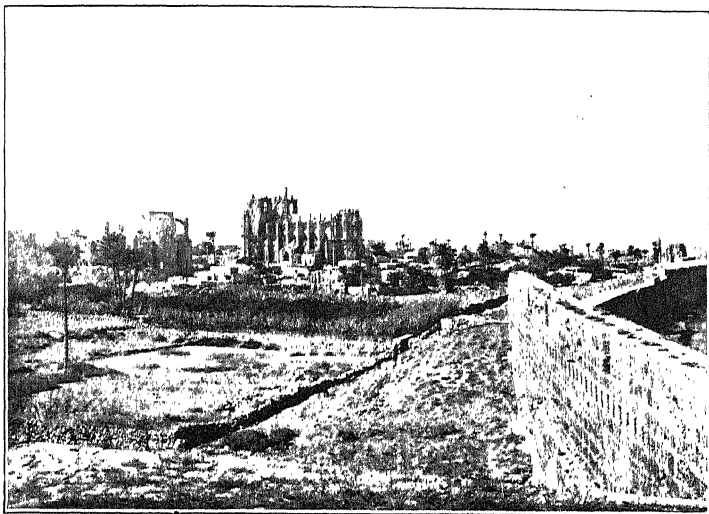
Crusade against the Saracens, he commemorated his vow in his Order of the Sword, whose motto was "Pour loyauté maintenir."<sup>1</sup> In 1362 he set out on his first journey to the rulers of Christendom and, after visiting the Pope, the Emperor and the King of France, crossed the Channel to enlist the aid of the Kings of England and Scotland. Froissart, to whom we are primarily indebted for our detailed knowledge of Peter's wanderings, describes the King's visit to London, where he was well received by Edward III. and Queen Philippa. Edward gave him a ship named the *Katharine*; Philippa offered him handsome presents; and, like royal visitors of a later age, he was dined by the Mayor of the City.<sup>2</sup>

Returning to the East after an Odyssey of nearly three years, Peter swooped down upon Egypt, the stronghold of Arab power, and by a brilliant *tour de main* seized Alexandria, though he held it for only one day. Again he went on his travels, undaunted by the ephemeral nature of his triumph, but was recalled by troubles at home. Peter, with all his kingly qualities, was not a model husband and sought in vain to disarm the jealousy of his wife, the vindictive Eleanor of Aragon, by causing her night-dress to be put in his bed every night that he spent away from her. The Queen, who was exercising the regency in his absence, took the opportunity to

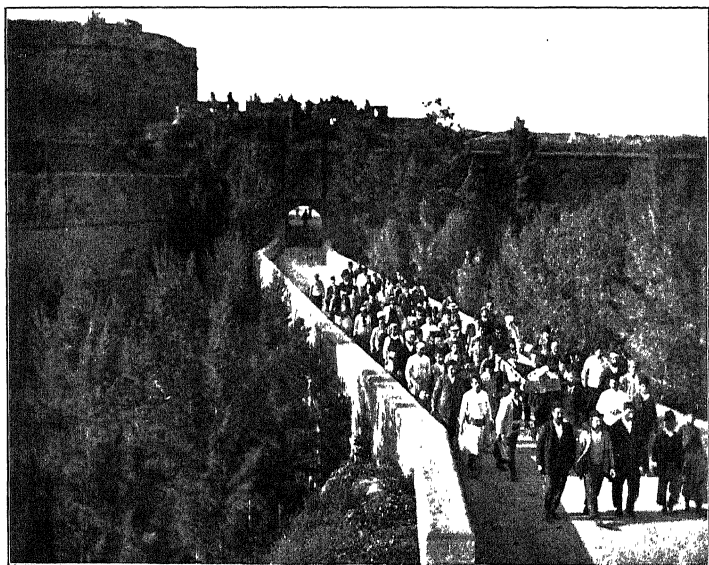
<sup>1</sup> Peter is related to have kept a naked sword constantly suspended from his neck in memory of this oath.

<sup>2</sup> This banquet, at which the Kings of England, Scotland, France and Denmark were King Peter's fellow-guests, is depicted in one of the historical paintings in the Royal Exchange.

PLATE VI



FAMAGUSTA FROM THE ARSENAL, LOOKING NORTH-WEST.



THE FUNERAL OF SIRILLEZEF LEAVING THE LAND GATE



## “A SEAPORT IN CYPRUS”

wreak her vengeance on the King's mistresses and repaid his infidelities in his own coin. Returning in haste, Peter was refused by his barons right against the Queen's lover and, embittered by disappointments both political and domestic, turned from an adored master into a cruel and capricious tyrant. He imprisoned the nobles who opposed him in a tower which—in common with his daughter and his favourite mule—he called Margaret, and was preparing to rid himself of his enemies by wholesale assassination. The intended victims got wind of the design and, entering his bedroom early one morning in January, 1369, stabbed Peter to death while his mistress was just able to make her escape by a trap-door.

It was a sad ending to a career of glorious promise and considerable achievement; and not wholly undeserved is Chaucer's kindly judgment on the ill-fated King :

“O worthy Petro, King of Cypre, also,  
That Alisaundre wan by heigh maistrye,  
Ful many a hethen wroghtes tow ful wo,  
Of which thyn owene liges hadde envye,  
And, for no thing but for thy chivalrye,  
They in thy bedde han slayn thee by the morwe.  
Thus can fortune hir wheel governe and gye,  
And out of Ioye bring men to sorwe.”

Peter was succeeded by his young son “Perrin,” the little Peter, who ascended the throne as Peter II. The new reign opened inauspiciously : at its very outset there occurred an incident which led to the ultimate ruin of the kingdom. The Lusignan Kings received the crown of Cyprus in the cathedral of Nicosia but that of Jerusalem, since the fall of Acre,

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in the cathedral of Famagusta as being the Cypriote town geographically nearest to the Holy Land. At the coronation of Peter II. in Famagusta a dispute as to precedence arose between the Consuls of Venice and Genoa, who had the privilege of leading, one on either side, the King's horse in the procession. Each claimed on this occasion to walk on the King's right and there resulted a bloody affray, in which the Genoese were worsted. Genoa promptly sent against Cyprus an expedition which only withdrew after the payment of a crushing ransom; what was worse, the Genoese insisted on retaining Famagusta, where they remained for ninety-one years. King James II. then expelled them by force of arms and restored the integrity of his dominions. But it was too late. For the little kingdom to be deprived, for close on a century, of its brilliant port and only natural harbour meant economic ruin; while to Famagusta itself, cut off by a hostile Power from the rest of the island, this unnatural separation was equally disastrous. No longer the port of an independent and neutral kingdom, no longer the outlet of a fertile and prosperous island but merely an enclave, a remote garrison town of distant Genoa, Famagusta ceased rapidly to be the entrepôt of surrounding countries. Its immense portable treasure had been sacked at the outset by the Genoese, its merchants were ruined, and a French visitor during the Genoese occupation found the sons of Lachas earning a precarious livelihood as daily labourers. Dead was now its commerce, empty were its wharves, fulfilled all too swiftly and literally S. Bridget's gloomy vaticinations.

## “A SEAPORT IN CYPRUS”

But Famagusta, although it never recovered its commercial prosperity, was yet destined for great experiences. James the Bastard, the gallant king who recovered the city from the Genoese, was induced by his hostility to Genoa to receive a wife from the Signory of Venice, and in 1472 was married with great pomp in the cathedral of the recently recovered town to the “Daughter of the Republic,” Katharine Cornaro. So far as the independence of the Cypriote kingdom was concerned Venice gave proof of all the qualities of the proverbial mother-in-law. James died mysteriously within a year of his marriage; within another year his posthumous son, James III., had followed him to the grave in an equally unexplained manner; and, after a reign of fourteen years, during which Cyprus was a barely disguised Venetian protectorate, Katharine was compelled by the Signory to abdicate the throne and to receive in exchange the little lordship of Asolo at the foot of the Dolomites. Perhaps the Serene Republic might have allowed its daughter to end her days in the enjoyment of her nominal sovereignty had it not been for the growing menace of the Turks. This circumstance induced the Signory to act with promptitude. Early in 1489 there was celebrated in S. Nicholas of Famagusta the solemnity of Katharine’s abdication. When, after mass, the three great doors of the west end were thrown open for the procession to pass out and a Queen of Cyprus crossed for the last time the threshold of the cathedral, the standard of S. Mark was hoisted over the city and the Venetian Admiral Prioli took formal possession of the island. For three centuries the Kings and Queens of the



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House of Lusignan had maintained their throne in this outpost of Christendom in the East and, despite varying fortunes, much glory had accrued to the gallant little realm. Thus it befell that the Venetians continued in their official documents the royal style to their new possession, and I have even found, in the island records, the Consuls of foreign Powers addressing their despatches to their Governments "dal regno di Cipro" well into the nineteenth century. The Venetians, who rather prided themselves on their scholarship, likewise deferred to tradition when they solemnly set up in front of S. Nicholas as the authentic tomb of Venus a sarcophagus which they had unearthed at Paphos;<sup>1</sup> but in other respects they were eminently practical. The fortifications of Famagusta had been allowed by the Genoese to fall into disrepair, and James II. had not had the time to restore them. The Venetians addressed themselves to the task with commendable energy, and within a relatively short time the genius of Sanmicheli had produced what Enlart<sup>2</sup> describes as "l'enceinte peut-être la plus belle et la plus complète que nous ait léguée l'art des ingénieurs de la Renaissance."

But it was of no avail. Sultan Selim the Sot, enamoured of Commanderia wine, determined to annex to his dominions a land which produced so magnificent a beverage and in 1570 despatched an expedition to Cyprus under his general, Lala Mustafa.

<sup>1</sup> Shortly after the British Occupation the "Tomb of Venus" was moved to one of the Orthodox cemeteries of Varosha to receive the remains of an English Commissioner of Famagusta.

<sup>2</sup> *L'Art gothique et la Renaissance en Chypre.*

## “A SEAPORT IN CYPRUS”

The defence of Famagusta was entrusted to Marcantonio Bragadino, a soldier who merited well of the Republic. The Venetian administration of Cyprus had been, on the whole, selfish and oppressive. To the Signory the island's only value lay in its strategical importance as an outpost against the Turks; the welfare of the inhabitants, whom it made no effort to help or conciliate, was to it a matter of indifference. But its defence of Famagusta redeemed many shortcomings. For four months Bragadino held the hosts of Sultan Selim at bay and, when finally forced to surrender, had cost the besiegers the lives of eighty thousand men. Well indeed might he engrave his copper siege-pieces, which in his need he was compelled to circulate as bezants, with the words “*Venetorum fides inviolabilis.*”

If the defence of Famagusta was the redeeming feature of the Venetian occupation of Cyprus, the cruel and treacherous murder of Bragadino was the darkest blot on the rule of the Turks. The city capitulated on the twofold condition that the lives of the defenders should be spared and that the garrison should march out with the honours of war and be conveyed in safety to Crete. But the baseborn Lala,<sup>1</sup> once in possession of his prize, wreaked his fury on the Venetian commander. First he cut off his nose and ears, then caused him to be “brutally flayed alive by a Jewish hangman—a spectacle of hideous and unparalleled barbarity. In the sight of the whole city, amidst the sharpest torments, his courage and constancy, and the calm-

<sup>1</sup> “Lala” is a Turkish word generally applied to a negro slave.

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

ness of his bearing and look, shone so fairly forth that he seemed rather to rejoice than suffer." "His skin seasoned with vinegar and salt," says a contemporary, Bishop Graziani, "Mustafa caused to be stuffed with hay and hung at the end of a yard for a spectacle to the coasts of Syria and Egypt. When the war was over it was put into the arsenal of Constantinople, whence the children of this generous martyr redeemed it, and preserved it in Venice as the most glorious trophy of their family." On one of the walls of the Pantheon of Venice, the church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo—Zanipolo in the soft Venetian dialect—is to be seen the elaborate monument erected to the memory of Bragadino by his sons and brother. A bust of the general ~~—~~ mounts the urn which holds his pitiful relics, placed here, in the words of the inscription, "*ad summi Dei patriæ paternique nominis gloriam sempiternam.*" Truly the glory is Bragadino's rather than his country's, for nothing so well became Venice in Cyprus as the manner in which she left it.

Europe was pained at the loss of an island that had been in western hands since Cœur de Lion's unpremeditated annexation in 1191, but made no effort to relieve the situation. It confined its practical interest to reading the accounts of the siege by Martinengo, Calepio and other eye-witnesses, which obtained a wide circulation; Brantôme turned aside for the moment from his "*dames galantes*" to celebrate the intrepid damsel who blew up in the harbour of Famagusta the galcon in which she and the most beautiful of her fellow-captives were being sent by Lala Mustafa to the slave-market of Stambul. A scion of the late Royal House, the

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Dominican Father Stephen de Lusignan, writing his *Chorography of Cyprus* some ten years after the island's capture, sought in vain to arouse some sympathy for his beloved country among the Christian princes whose Courts he visited, believing rightly “que tout ce mal est advenu par la paresse et négligence ou envie des chrétiens.” All he obtained, poor man, was the advice to remain in his cloister, but his reply to this counsel is not lacking in nobility.

“Je voudrois,” he says, “que ces enflez et seulement braves en paroles entreprinsent de faict de relever et conduire hors Cypre en un païs chrestien ma sœur Isabelle avec son mary et son fils qui demeurent au village de Silicon, où ils n'ont seulement le moyen de se saouler de pain d'orge et ont grand peur qu'on ne fasse leur fils janissaire ou turc. Semblablement qu'ils retirent de Cypre et hors de Famagouste Lucie avec son mary et son fils, laquelle est fille de ma sœur Lusignane : ou qu'ils rachètent l'autre fille de ceste mienne sœur nommée Laure, captive en Cilicie ; qu'ils rachètent Philippe Paléologue et sa sœur captifs en Constantinople : et alors je promets à ces princes murmurateurs d'accomplir et effectuer leur conseil.”

The Turks, who are no vandals and only destroy when there is some object to be gained by destruction, repaired the damage done to the walls by the siege and turned S. Nicholas into a mosque, a fact to which it owes its preservation. To be sure, they allowed the harbour to silt up, yet the Scotsman Lithgow, visiting Famagusta in 1611, was able to say of it : “The Fortresse of Rhodes, and that Fortresse Famogusta in Cyprus, are the two strongest holds in all the Empire of the Great Turke.” Famagusta had with Rhodes two other points of resemblance. In Rhodes, under Ottoman rule, only Turks and Jews were allowed to reside within the

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walled city, in Famagusta only Turks, so that in Rhodes the suburbs of Mara and Neomara, in Famagusta that of Varosha, housed the Christian community. In the second place, both towns, having pleasant surroundings and an agreeable climate, became places of banishment for that favoured type of exile, the official who had temporarily incurred the Sultan's displeasure but might reasonably be expected to be restored to grace with the turn of fortune's wheel. In the course of my travels in Turkey I have met more than one Vali who had spent his youth in Famagusta in the house of an exiled parent; and, when Great Britain occupied Cyprus in 1878, several State prisoners were found within its walls. The most interesting of these was the saintly Subh-i-Ezel, "The Dawn of Eternity," successor of the Persian, Mirza Ali Mohammed, who founded the Babi sect and was put to death by the Shah in 1850. The Babis, expelled from Persia after their founder's execution, took refuge in Baghdad, and were then transferred by the Turkish Government to Adrianople, the Shah considering that in Baghdad they were too close to the Persian frontier. While in Adrianople, the sect was rent in twain by schism. Subh-i-Ezel's more assertive half-brother Bahau'llah now claimed the leadership and maintained, indeed, that Mirza Ali, the Bab, had been no more than his, Bahau'llah's, forerunner. While some of the community continued to acknowledge the Bab and adhered to Subh-i-Ezel, others followed Bahau'llah and called themselves Bahais. Meanwhile both sections were again deported by the Turks, the Ezelis to Famagusta, Bahau'llah and his followers to Acre. When, after the British occupa-

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tion, Subh-i-Ezel was free to leave Cyprus, he elected to remain in Famagusta, where he lived on a small subsidy from the Cyprus Government until his death in 1912 at the age of eighty-two. From Acre the Bahai faith has spread to Europe and the United States and counts two millions of adherents; the Ezelis have dwindled to a handful.

Not only in situation but in its buildings and inhabitants Famagusta belongs in part to Europe, in part to Asia, in part to Africa. European are its Gothic churches, its Venetian ramparts, its gates and portcullises, its moat hewn out of the solid rock. European is the Greek-speaking section of the population, which inhabits Varosha and extra-mural Famagusta. Asiatic are the Turks of the ~~walled town~~, sitting in the coffee-shops of the square in front of S. Nicholas under the shadow of its tall minaret. Asiatic are the brilliant colouring of sky and sea, the stone-work's golden patina. African are the descendants of the Nubian slaves of Turkish Governors and distinguished exiles, tall negroes whose swarthy hue contrasts so vividly with the dead white of their turbans and baggy breeches. African are the date-palms dotted over the empty spaces, where once stood the palaces of Lachas and his fellows.

Let me endeavour to describe how this town of three continents presents itself to the visitor of to-day on his first arrival. We will suppose him to approach Famagusta by sea, so that he will observe from afar the noble fortifications, perfect as if they had been built yesterday. Facing him, as the ship comes to anchor alongside the quay of the harbour now dredged and active once more, is the curtain of

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the sea-wall, pierced by a modern opening. To the left is the Water Gate with its graceful Venetian marble porch; to the right the wall and bastions of the mediæval castle, projecting towards the sea in "Othello's Tower," its base lapped by the waves. Above the ramparts appear towers and belfries of countless Gothic churches, dominated by the lofty choir and bays of S. Nicholas.

The view foreshadows within those ramparts a live and populous city; utterly surprising, then, must be the effect on the visitor as he makes his way through the opening in the walls. For now he sees the desolation of this "mediæval Pompeii," now realizes that, with all the perfection of its fortifications, the profusion of its churches, Famagusta is in truth a sleeping beauty. Within the *enceinte* of Sanmicheli, once the habitation of many thousands, are empty spaces and a few kitchen-gardens, date-palms and an occasional fig-tree, among which some thirty churches, looking indeed, as Mallock says, like a flock of scattered sheep, seem to pasture undisturbed. The remarkable feature of Famagusta is that, while fortifications and churches have survived, there remains barely a trace of its domestic buildings. The stones of these, alas, were sold by the Turks to the builders of Alexandria and Port Said, and of the private palaces and mansions of mediæval times not a fragment survives. Amid these noble walls and bastions, this score and a half of graceful churches, the only houses are some humble Turkish dwellings; even of the official buildings of the past there remain but a dilapidated corner of the Bishop's palace and the bare walls of the residence of the Venetian *Proveditore*.

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In the middle of Famagusta is a large open space, now surrounded by Turkish coffee-shops and a primitive bazaar. On the western side of this square is the palace of the *Proveditore*, on the eastern rises majestically the cathedral of S. Nicholas, resembling that of Rheims not only in the circumstance that it, too, was a coronation church. An advantage which the great cathedrals of Cyprus, S. Sophia of Nicosia and S. Nicholas of Famagusta, possess over those of Europe is that, unaltered since the fourteenth century and lost to Christian use since the sixteenth, they are free from the modifications of subsequent ages. For this reason, as on account of their intrinsic merit, they can be ignored by no serious student of Gothic architecture. The two cathedrals offer an interesting diversity. S. Nicholas lacks the narthex, which is so interesting a feature of S. Sophia, but its decoration is richer, its general effect lighter and airier than that of its inland fellow. The interior has lost nothing of its dignity, of its noble proportions, under the austere whitewash of a shrine of Islam. Its frescoes, it is true, have been painted over, its rich fittings have been swept away, but the sun still shines through the traceried windows on to Frankish tombstones lying at the foot of a Moslem *minber*. The west front of the church is a piece of lace-work carried out in stone. Its triple porch, its great west window full of delicate tracery, its corner towers, from one of which grows naturally enough a slender minaret, present a truly noble picture, flanked on the one side by a remarkable chapter-house and by the tombstone of a Frankish lady on which the bodies of dead Turks are laid out for burial, on the other by the *türbé* of some

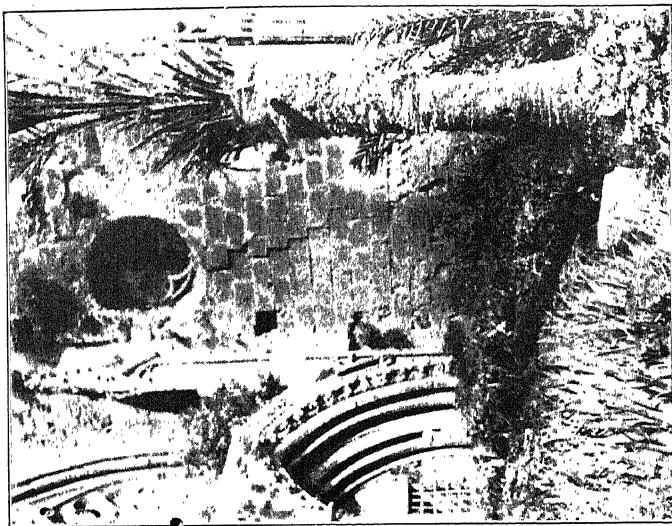


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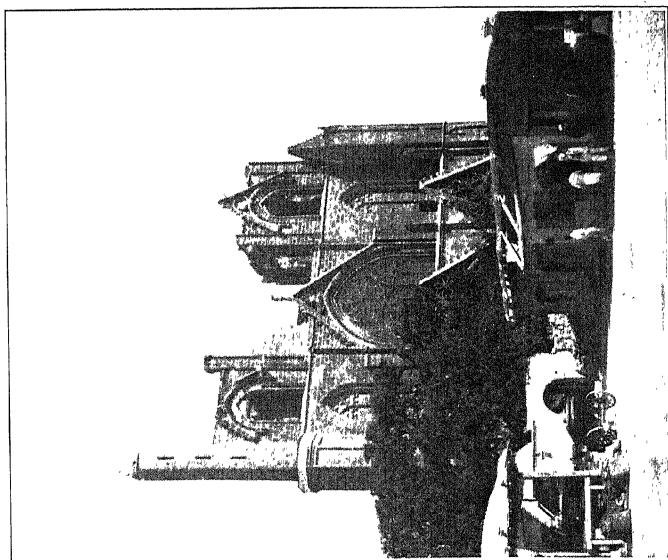
forgotten Pasha nestling in the shade of a gigantic sycamore. And what scenes have not been enacted between the porch and the palace opposite! The sumptuous coronation of Peter I., described in detail by his great chancellor, Philippe de Mézières, was followed a year later by a procession of all the inhabitants of Famagusta, irrespective of creed, to pray for the cessation of the plague. We read of Latins and Greeks, Armenians and Nestorians, Jacobites and Indians of far Malabar, Abyssinians and Saracens, marching barefoot to S. Nicholas to join Peter Thomas in intercession for the divine mercy. Then came the disastrous coronation of Peter's successor, the luckless Perrin, and the lamentable predictions, all too soon fulfilled, of the ill-omened Brigitta. Then, with a new ray of hope, took place the marriage of James II. to the beautiful Cornaro; but the ray was dimmed with the king's burial within a twelvemonth, and it faded with the melancholy ceremony of his widow's abdication. Here, before his palace, can be pictured Cristoforo Moro, *Luogotenente di Cipro*, calling vengeance on the authors of his domestic infelicities; here, in front of the ravaged cathedral, Bragadino suffered his ghastly martyrdom.

Not all the churches of Famagusta are products of the art of the north of France; you may choose, in this cosmopolitan town, the school of architecture that you prefer. You will find the restrained influence of Paris and Champagne, the richer art of Provence, the sensuous beauty of Italy and Catalonia. You will also find these western schools blending curiously and not unpleasingly with the domes and apses of later Byzantine. But

PLATE VII



S. NICHOLAS : SOUTH PORCH.



S. NICHOLAS : WEST FRONT.



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one feature they have in common, these diverse churches of mediæval Famagusta: their stones, which would be admirable in the cold lights of Northern Europe, are transformed into something far more wonderful in the golden haze of the Levant. Mallock had doubtless the same feeling when, mistaking the French work of the cathedral for English, he described S. Nicholas as “an English flower that, bewitched by a strange climate, had opened wider than it ever would have opened at home.”

A little to the west of the cathedral, from which it is separated by one street, is the massive church of SS. Peter and Paul, built by a merchant of Famagusta with a part of the profits of a single journey to Syria. Nearer the sea-wall is the fairy-like fragment of S. George of the Latins, which, although only the half of it remains, resembles in airy grace S. Katharine of Nicosia and differs markedly from the heavier S. George of the Greeks, Famagusta's Orthodox cathedral. The latter is situated in what was the Greek quarter at the southern end of the town, by the great Land Gate; the northern end was the quarter of the Oriental Christians. Here, remote and isolated, for the modern inhabitants of Famagusta have not settled in this direction, are the churches and chapels of Maronites, Nestorians and Armenians. That of the Nestorians, built by the brothers Lachas, is the only mediæval church of Famagusta which is in Christian use to-day, although there are no longer any Nestorians in Cyprus. In it there is now held on Sundays an Orthodox service, and the Orthodox denominate it the Church of S. George the Exiler,

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"*Άγιος Γεώργιος Εωρινός*. This saint has the interesting faculty of securing the banishment of those against whom his help is invoked. Whoever would be rid of his enemy has but to drop in the house of the victim a little dust from the floor of the church, but he must take care not to pass out of the city gate with the soil on his person. If he does, he, too, will leave the country before the year is out. So, if his enemy lives outside the town, he throws the packet of earth over the rampart and picks it up when he is on the other side. In this corner, too, there rises the Martinengo bastion, which Diehl, in a charming chapter on "*Villes Mortes d'Orient*,"<sup>1</sup> praises for "*la beauté solide de la construction, l'entente savante des flanquements, l'habile étagement des feux, toutes les ressources enfin que la science et le zèle des ingénieurs de Venise avaient préparées — en vain, hélas — pour l'héroïque et suprême résistance de Bragadino.*"

A report written in 1843 by the British Consular Agent in Famagusta for the information of a newly arrived chief in Larnaca<sup>2</sup> shows us this city, once so thriving, at the lowest ebb of its fortunes. It was inhabited "by a miserable population of 500 Turks of both sexes"; its harbour could only be entered by the smallest of sailing craft. But with the advent of British rule it has secured a new lease of life and, it may be hoped, of prosperity. In 1905 it became the eastern terminus of the island railway; in the following year its harbour was dredged and restored, after centuries of neglect,

<sup>1</sup> *En Méditerranée*, Paris, 1901.

<sup>2</sup> Luke, *Cyprus under the Turks*, Oxford, 1921, pp. 179-83.

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to ocean-going traffic. Indeed, with farther expenditure it could become, in competent naval opinion, the best harbour in the Near East. The Turkish rulers of Cyprus had always believed that, if the harbour were dredged, much treasure would be found buried in the silt. And a treasure was found in very truth, although it was not of so negotiable a nature as that of which a succession of needy Pashas had dreamed so longingly. It proved to be one of the nineteen cannon presented by Henry VIII. to the Grandmaster de l'Isle Adam for the recapture of Rhodes, and it was evidently sunk off Famagusta in the course of some engagement. Suitably mounted, it now adorns one of the terraces of Government House in Nicosia.

Fortunately the renaissance of activity has not destroyed the charm of this sleeping city of the Latin East, a charm which would be broken were villas and warehouses to cover the pastures where its flock of churches browses in solitude. The new quarters of Famagusta are growing up outside the walls; and Varosha, once a lowly suburb, is becoming a flourishing township, extending with its orange-gardens far down the southern curve of the bay. The Famagusta oranges, in size one of the mightiest species of their race, vie in quality and appearance with the best that Jaffa can produce; and for miles along the shore, where the madder root was cultivated until displaced by the hateful aniline, there stretches a forest of the air-motors that irrigate them, looking for all the world like an oasis of date-palms. When the visitor whose impressions we have been recording departs by his steamer from the inner harbour, when he has looked his last

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

on S. Nicholas and "Othello's Tower," there pursues him, if the wind is from the land, the scent of the orange blossom, suggesting faintly and sadly, until he is well out to sea, the wedding-shroud of Desdemona.

## CHAPTER IV

### LE DOUX PAYS DE CHYPRE

ἰκοίμαν ποτὶ Κύπρον  
νᾶσον τᾶς Ἀφροδίτας,  
ἵν' οἱ θελξιφρονες νέμον-  
ται θνατοῖσιν Ἔρωτες,

ἐκεῖσ' ἄγε με . . .

ἐκεῖ χάριτες, ἐκεῖ δὲ πόθος.

“Where is the Home for me  
O Cyprus, set in the sea,  
Aphrodite's home in the soft sea-foam,  
Would I could wend to thee;  
Where the wings of the Loves are furled,  
And faint the heart of the World.

O there is Grace, and there is the Heart's Desire,  
And peace to adore thee, thou Spirit of Guiding Fire !”

ONE opinion, as regards Cyprus, is common to the mediæval French pilgrim whose phrase gives its title to this chapter, and to Euripides and his translator, Gilbert Murray. This Cyprus set in the sea is indeed a sweet land

“Where the rainless meadows smile  
With riches rolled from the hundred-fold  
Mouths of the far-off Nile,”

a fit dwelling-place for the Muses, a land meet to have given birth to laughter-loving Aphrodite.

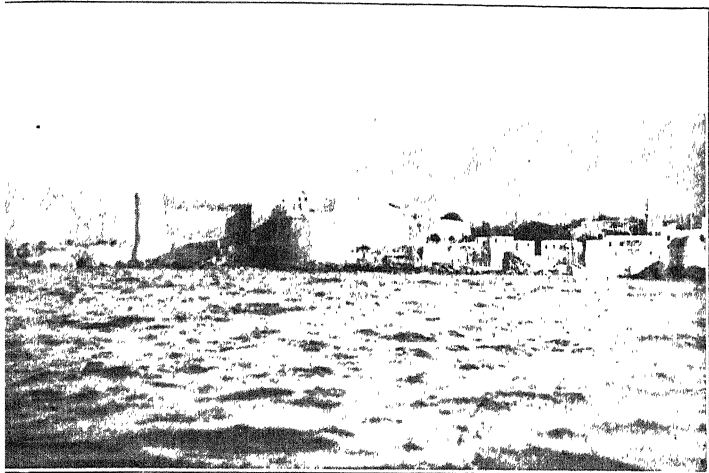


## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

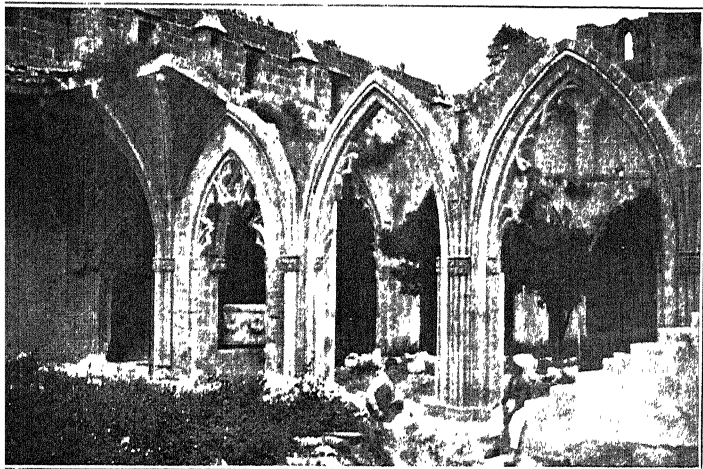
But while the meadows smile, the meadows which merge into the great central plain of the island, the MESAORIA, the "Land between the Mountains," what of the mountains themselves, the fantastically serrated Kyrenia range which is the northern sea-wall of Cyprus, and the more massive range in the south-western part of the island that culminates in Mount Troödos or Olympus? On their peaks and slopes and among their valleys there is scenery which, I maintain, cannot be surpassed elsewhere in colour, in romantic outline, in fragrance of vegetation. Although they are small when compared with the great ranges of the world, I claim for the mountains of Cyprus that they contain and are bounded by all that is most perfect in mountain-land and forest, sea and sky.

Leaving aside the towns and the MESAORIA, I would take the reader through the forest and hill country of Cyprus, beginning at Cape Andreas, the island's eastern extremity, then working westwards through the Karpass peninsula and the Kyrenia range to the Bay of Morphou, thence fetching a circuit, which will embrace the Troödos forests and the peninsula of Akámas rich in legend, to Paphos beloved of Aphrodite. The time of year is early spring—early spring in Cyprus, be it understood—namely February, the month when the mountain streams come tumbling down the hill-sides in full spate, when the oleander that fringes their banks is bursting into bloom, when in the foot-hills and plains the shy little winter narcissus is being replaced by the larger variety, when the woods and mountain-sides are pink with cyclamen. At this time it is a delight to be about in Cyprus, to live "green days"

PLATE VIII



KYRENIA.



BELLA PAISE.

*To face page 80.*



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in her forests and "blue days" by her shores, to wander with tent and mule among the more recondite beauty-spots of an island of many beauties. The Karpass, that long and narrow peninsula which, projecting for forty miles beyond the rest of Cyprus, points like an index finger at the Gulf of Alexandretta, is then blossoming out after the winter rains. From its base by the juniper forest of Vallia to its tip at Cape Andreas and its outposts, the Kleides Islands, it is a little paradise of undulating green, with hues that range from the tender colour of the young barley through the silvery gleam of the olive to the deeper tones of the mulberries in its plains and the cypresses on its hills. Its hills are the eastern continuation and end of the Kyrenia range, running with diminishing height but scarcely diminishing beauty to Land's End, which is the Monastery of the Apostle Andrew, the islanders' favourite place of pilgrimage. Isolated from the rest of Cyprus by its remote situation and containing, perhaps, among its population traces of Crusading stock, the Karpass, at one time the senior fief of feudal Cyprus, still differs from other parts of the island in its distinctive costume, distinctive customs and a distinctive physical type. The Karpasitói are without doubt the handsomest of the inhabitants of Cyprus, their clothes the most picturesque, their villages the neatest and most prosperous-looking.

Riding westward from the monastery past the principal village of the peninsula, the scattered Rhizo Karpass, past Yialousa gleaming on the northern coast, past ample Heptakomé (only in the Karpass and its neighbourhood does the ancient word κώμη

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

survive among village place-names), we arrive at the first real eminences of the Kyrenia Mountains and at the first of the castles of the Lusignan Kings of Cyprus, which cling with astounding picturesqueness to their steepest and loftiest crags. There are three of these castles on the summits of the northern range, vying with one another in beauty and boldness of site; between them nestle, unsuspected from below, such fairy-like spots as Khalevga and the forest of Qartal Dagħ. And the names are almost as beautiful as the places. The most easterly of the castles, thickly overgrown by the spreading cypress peculiar to this island, is Kantara, from whose walls you survey the Karpas to the east, the MESAORIA and the Bay of Famagusta to the south and to the north, beyond the intervening sea, the snow-capped mountains of Asia Minor. Farther westward, beyond Homerically named Pentedactylos, the "five-fingered peak," comes impregnable Buffavento, rearing its turrets in defiance of the winds on the very summit of the ridge. Still farther to the west is S. Hilarion or Dieu d'Amour, also known in common with Buffavento and Kantara to the Turkish peasantry as *yüz bir ev*, a hundred and one houses, and to the Orthodox by its Greek equivalent of *ἐκατόν σπίτια*. But before saying more of S. Hilarion I would gladly halt for a moment at Khalevga, which is best reached from the village of Kythraa, fortunate possessor of a bountiful and perennial spring.

From Kythraa it is a ride of two hours along a mountain track to this delicious forest bower. First you pass the little plateau of Phylleri, rich in secular olive-trees and hidden from the view of the plain in

## LE DOUX PAYS DE CHYPRE

a fold of the slopes of Pentedactylos. You then enter a narrow defile and emerge into a thickly wooded glade of surpassing beauty, set astride the saddle of the ridge. This is Khalevga, beloved of the chosen few who know it as a place of pure delight, an enchanted nook well worthy of the "Enchanted Island." To the south lies spread below you the full expanse of the Mesaoria, with Troödos in the background and in the foreground the white road winding its way into Nicosia encompassed in its greenery. All this is pleasant enough, but to the north the view beggars description. On either hand the fantastic curves and precipitous slopes of the Kyrenia Mountains, capped with mediæval castles, delightfully wooded, infinitely varied, deeply indented by valleys red with oleander. Below them a narrow strip of fertile land, well covered with olive and caroub trees and dotted with prosperous villages glistening in the sunlight. Then forty miles of amaranthine sea and, finally, the long line of the Karamanian Taurus, snow-clad and majestic. And what of Khalevga itself, whence all this may be seen? A green paradise, cool and redolent of pine and cypress and wild myrtle and a hundred fragrant woodland shrubs, nestling against the peak of Qartal Dagħ, the home, as its name implies in Turkish, of innumerable eagles. Around you, all covered with bosage, are lesser crags, where the wood-pigeons have their haunt; at your feet a carpet of ranunculus and anemones, wild hyacinth and violets and tender cyclamen. It is a place of quiet, undisturbed by human habitation other than the forest hut that gives you shelter. Faintly in the distance you may hear the tinkle of

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the flocks going to pasture or the deeper note of the threefold bell of the camels crossing the ridge, laden with forest produce. Else all is peace. A mile below you is the one touch which the hand of man has contributed to this idyl—an Armenian monastery of the fifteenth century ensconced in a valley overlooking the sea. But S. Macarius adds to rather than detracts from the prevailing atmosphere; none there are busy except the bees who make the honey for which the place is famous. The grey walls of this ancient retreat, pierced by narrow Gothic windows, are truly in keeping with the Kyrenia Mountains, that perfect blend of sylvan beauties and mediæval art.

A delicious place in spring, I am not sure that Khalevga is not yet more enthralling in winter. In spring there are the flowers and the young green, rosy-fingered dawn and nacreous twilight; but in winter there is something about these mountains that appeals, to me at least, even more forcibly than vernal charms. Snow falls but rarely on the Kyrenia Mountains but, even so, the cold, exhilarating winter weather makes it a joy to be alive; and you can see as much snow as you want on Troödos and on the mountains of Karamania across the strait. In the afternoon Scotch mists climb slowly along the chain of mountain-tops and, as they gather round Qartal Dagh and his fellows, cloak them in a shroud of mystery. And in the evening, after a long day's tramp over the hills to the village of Khartja or to the crumbling monastery of Antiphonétissa, you return to a roaring fire of olive wood and pine-cones on the stoep of the forest-hut and, well content, sip a glass of the fragrant liqueur brewed by the monks of Kykkos.

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Of the three castles on the summit of the range it is difficult to say which is the most beautiful. In site as in architecture all three are fantastic, improbable, unreal, too ethereal, too fairy-like, to seem anything but the castles of dreamland or of a mirage. Buffavento, whose very name is pure romance, has the most challenging position but is the least well preserved. Kantara, best seen from the north, where its walls tower two thousand feet above the coast, has the noblest views, with the sea and the Taurus to the north of it, the sea to the south, to the west the semicircle of the Kyrenia range sweeping with its line of jagged mountain-tops into the dim blue distance of Cape Kormakiti, to the east its saw-like ridge dropping with graceful *diminuendo* towards Cape Andreas. On the whole, perhaps, S. Hilarion is the most picturesque for it was not only, like the other two, a stronghold intended as a place of refuge in times of stress but was also the summer retreat, the Windsor, of the Kings and Queens of the House of Lusignan. The tilting-ground, where the nobles jousted on their scarlet-tailed chargers, is easily discernible in the hollow below the barbican, and from the mullioned windows of the "Queen's Lodging," beside which the wild hyacinth grows in abundance, you may still look past Karmin village upon one of the fairest landscapes in the world.

S. Hilarion overlooks, in the strip of land at the foot of the northern slope of the mountains, a region of surpassing loveliness. It has been well said that, while there is a certain austerity about the rest of Cyprus, the Kyrenia coast recalls the richness of Italy. True, this narrow tract of country between



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the mountains and the sea resembles Italy, but that Italy which is half Greece both in name and speech and scene—Magna Græcia; even more does it resemble certain regions of Sicily. Here, as at Girgenti and in the parts about Táranto, sea and sky are of a sharp, clear blue, olives silvery, cypresses of the deepest green. Anemone and cyclamen carpet the ground, gladiolus and wild iris mingle with the growing corn, rosemary and thyme and cistus perfume the air. Beneath a stone-pine the goatherd plays the pan-pipe to his flock, plays doleful strains in the Dorian mode; from the myrtle-scented hill-side is heard, as if in echo, the cadence of the peasant's *mélopée*.

ἐκεῖ χάριτες, ἐκεῖ δὲ πόθος.

Here might Theocritus have sought inspiration for his idyls no less than in his Syracusan groves and in his mossy glades beside the Anapus; here, by a spring half veiled with fern, have sung of Daphnis and Menalcas and rustic loves.

And here, in some shady nook, would I sit and delight in the "little pictures" of the sweet poet of Syracuse. In a dell where the galingale blows and softly hum the bees about the hives, where the scent of the pine mingles with the fragrance of cistus and elecampane, there sing to me, son of Praxagoras, of thy swains contending in pastoral song on the grassy slopes above the sea. Below me a slender cypress shoots up, a moss-green shaft as seen against the sapphire sky; at my feet are cyclamen and ranunculus, the delicate narcissus of early spring and sweet-scented hyacinth. In the morning would I fain listen to the banter of thy hinds, "when the

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horses of the Sun are climbing the sky, bearing Dawn of the rosy arms from the ocean stream." But at even, when Lady Selene foretells the coming of quiet night, then sing of distraught Simaetha and her bitter pain, of the girl bereft "like a field reaped and gleaned, like a church where no man comes to pray, like a city desolate."<sup>1</sup>

No cloying epic do I ask of thee, Theocritus, meet only for the scented halls of Alexandria; no song attuned to the ear of Oriental tyrant. Sing thou rather of Battus bewailing in the olive-grove the gracious Amaryllis or praising his gypsy love, the nut-brown maid; of neatherds piping in friendly rivalry on their high Sicilian pastures. Tell not of Ptolemy and his luxurious feasts, relate not his pomps and "*Persicos apparatus*"; but sing of the groves of Cos, fragrant of dew and early morn, when the moon is fresh set and the sun fresh risen on Cyprus and the isles of Greece.

Below Hilarion lies the pretty seaport of Kyrenia, in whose massive castle the daughter of the only Emperor of Cyprus sought refuge from Richard Cœur de Lion, and Queen Carlotta, the last legitimate sovereign of the House of Lusignan, held out for four years against her bastard brother James. Three miles to the east is the Abbey of Bella Paise, in all likelihood the most important as well as the most beautiful monument of the Latin East; to the west, Lapethos with its monastery of Acheiropoietos, dedicated to the image of Christ "not wrought by the hand of man." A little beyond Lapethos, tucked away in the north-west corner of

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Andrew Lang from a modern Greek peasant ballad.

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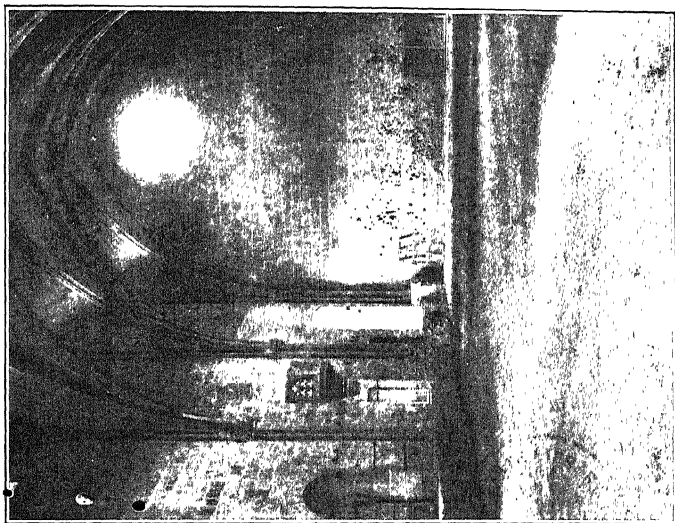
the island, are the four villages inhabited for centuries by colonies of Maronites from the Lebanon; above them lies the monastery of Myrtou, at one time the seat of the Bishops of Kyrenia. Of the beauties of Bella Paise it is beyond my powers to give an adequate description; paints, and not phrases, are the medium for the purpose. In a delightful paper on "Some Aspects of Cyprus" Sir Anton Bertram has compared Bella Paise with Tintern; but with what can Tintern match the sweeping curve of mountains, the blue sea and distant Asian ranges, the groves of oranges and lemons and the stone-work tinged with gold?

Of a different kind are the attractions of the mountains which occupy most of the south-western part of the island. Their summits, higher but less abrupt than those of the Kyrenia Mountains, are covered with fragrant pine forests, not with castles; no Gothic abbeys lurk in their deep and rugged valleys. In the Kyrenia Mountains nature and art compete with the happiest results; in the others, only a humble Byzantine mountain church, with its peculiar timber roof, seconds, here and there, the efforts of nature. The culmination of this mountainous region—it can hardly be called a range—is one of the Olympi of antiquity,

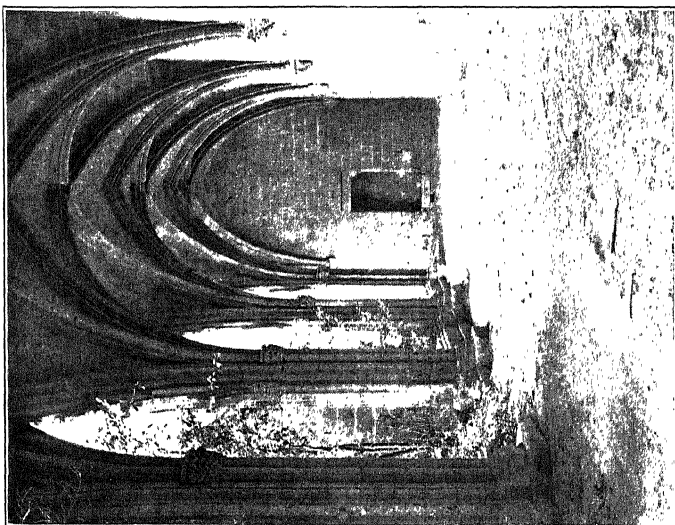
Πιερία μούσειος ἔδρα,  
σεμνὰ κλιτὺς Ὀλύμπου,

now Mount Troödos, the summer station of the Cyprus Government and the troops. Troödos, to quote Sir Anton Bertram, is all "pine trees, bracken and red earth, and beneath you, wherever you look, is an indescribable view, to which distance lends

PLATE IX



BELLA PAIZE : REFECTION.



BELLA PAIZE : CLOISTER.



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the proverbial quality of enchantment." Over to the north-west you see remotely the wild and densely wooded region of Tyllirià, last refuge of the sect of Linobambakoi (Flax-cottons or "Linsey-woolseys"), who compromise between Christianity and Islam by keeping the names and ceremonies of both faiths. Towards the south, where the salt-lake of Limasol glimmers in the distance six thousand feet below, you overlook mountains and foot-hills covered with vineyards; for Cyprus produces much wine and some of its vintages have become famous. Of these is the dessert wine known as Commanderia because it is produced from vineyards which once were part of the Grand Commandery of the Knights of S. John in Cyprus. An old French belief ascribes to this same region the origin of champagne; and, as the story is little known, I may perhaps be allowed to tell it here. Early in the thirteenth century Thibaut IV., Count of Champagne, returning from a Crusade, stopped in the island on his homeward journey to visit his cousin, Queen Alice of Cyprus, consort of Hugh I. During his sojourn in the island a young noble of the King's Court was condemned to death for having stolen by night into the apartments of the Queen's ladies, among whom was his betrothed. Count Thibaut, as befitted a Troubadour prince, looked indulgently on offences of this kind and begged that the life of the guilty one might be spared. His request was granted on the condition that he took the offender with him to Champagne; and in due course Thibaut, accompanied by his protégé, arrived at his castle of Troyes. But soon the young swain fell ill of pining for his sweetheart and the tender-

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hearted Count sent him back to Cyprus, bidding him marry his lady and return with her to Champagne. More than a year elapsed, and the Count began to think that his friend had forgotten him, when a young man and woman were announced at the castle gate, seeking admittance.

They were the knight and his lady, now happily wedded and bringing from Cyprus gifts in token of their gratitude to the Count. The damsel's offering was a rose-bush, which has produced the sweet-smelling rose of Provins; that of the young man was a bunch of cuttings from the best vines of Olympus which, as they multiplied on the chalky cliffs of the Marne, gave the wine of champagne to France.

A sunset over Panagia Hill and *Papilos* is a spectacle not to be forgotten. As seen from the white rock of *Asprókremnos* on *Troödos* it is for all the world like the sunset of a Japanese print. The *Laricio* pines, their tops stunted and deformed by the masses of snow under which they are weighted throughout the winter, have assumed dwarfed and fantastic shapes which, together with their deep green—far deeper than that of the Aleppo pine of the lower levels—contrasted with the equally deep crimson of the rapidly sinking sun, produce effects in colouring and design such as are seen in the works of Hiroshige. The wild valleys that run down to the south-west, *Stavros* and *Ayià*, are the haunts of the vanishing and elusive moufflon, only survivor of the bigger game of Cyprus. And as you emerge from the dense forest of *Stavros* into the open hill country of *Lyso*, where are grown what I believe to be the best figs in the world, you see

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before you the glorious sweep of Chrysochou Bay, bounded on the north by the rugged ridge of the Troödos *massif* as it dips down to the sea at Pomos Point, on the south by the green and gentle slopes that end in the romantic peninsula of Akámas. In this delicious forest-tract, this

“olive-hoary cape in ocean,”

now inhabited only by game-birds, Aphrodite wedded Acamas; here, in a spot that is all deep shadows and ferns, is the Cypriote peasant's *Brúσις τῶν Ἐρώτων*, Ariosto's Fount of Love. By the farther of two ravines, a few hundred yards inland, is a semicircular wall of rock, at whose foot the spring bubbles up in a pool overhung by six ancient fig trees. The roots of these trees find their support, only Aphrodite knows how, on the face of the rock and, moss-covered, have the appearance of stalactites of green. The branches droop gracefully, like weeping willows, over the natural apse made by the rock, veiling a background of moss and maidenhair and all manner of other ferns. All around cyclamen, pink and white, bloom in astonishing profusion; and wild myrtle and the ubiquitous elecampane give to the air an aromatic pungency, to which the whiff of the sea adds its quota. Above the rock the reeds grow thickly; and over the way, across the Gulf of Chrysochou, are Pomos Point and the forests of Tyllirià, flanked to the west by the snowy line of the Mountains of Pamphylia :

“Quindi a un Greco-levante spiegò ogni ala,  
Volando da man destra a Cipro intorno,  
E surse a Pafo, e pose in terra scala;  
E i naviganti uscir nel lito adorno



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Chi per merce levar, chi per vedere  
La terra d'amor piena e di piacere.

Dal mar sei miglia o sette; a poco a poco  
Si va salendo inverso il colle ameno.  
Mirti e cedri e naranci e lauri il loco,  
E mille altri soavi arbori han pieno—  
Serpillo e persa, e rose e gigli, e croco  
Spargon dall' odorifero terreno  
Tanta soavità, ch' in mar sentire  
La fa ogni vento che da terra spire.

Da limpida fontana tutta quella  
Piaggia rigando va un ruscel fecondo.  
Ben si può dir che sia di Vener bella  
Il luogo dilettevole e giocondo;  
Che v' è ogni donna affatto, ogni donzella  
Piacevol più, ch' altrove sia nel mondo;  
E fa la Dea che tutte ardon d' amore  
Giovani e vecchie, infino all' ultim' o

And so let us close this little pilgrimage, riding  
along the fertile coastland into Paphos with the  
note of the conch-shell blown by the Paphian  
camel-drivers ringing in our ears and the fra-  
grance of the wild herbs, marjoram and balsam,  
basil and rosemary, perfuming the air around us.

“ O there is Grace, and there is the Heart's Desire,  
And peace to adore thee, thou Spirit of Guiding Fire ! ”

## CHAPTER V

### THE CITY OF DANCING DERVISHES

#### I

To one who had not travelled in the interior of Turkey since the revolution of 1908 the absence, on landing at the port of Mersina, of the vexatious formalities so dear to the old régime was eminently refreshing. The close scrutiny of one's passport, not infrequently held upside down by suspicious functionaries, the achievement of a *tezkeré*, which had to be *visé*, at a price, as one entered each separate vilayet, the demand for detailed and intimate personal information presented on a formidable questionnaire, these and similar sources of worry were no more. With a polite "*Buyurun, Effendim*" I was bowed past the Harbour Police Office, a fortress not easily stormed in the days of Abdul Hamid.

I had arrived from Cyprus, and my object was to reach Smyrna by way of Konia, once the capital of the Seljuq Sultans of Rûm and still the headquarters of the Mevlevi Order of (Dancing) Dervishes, and Aqshehir, the home of Turkey's greatest jester, the Khoja Nasr ed-Dîn. Toward the end of 1915, the Vali of Konia told me, the Baghdad Railway, after tunnelling through the Taurus, would reach Adana on the Mersina-Adana Railway and

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thus enable the journey I was undertaking to be performed entirely by rail; at present railhead is a spot called Kara Puñar (Black Spring) on the northern slope of the Taurus, leaving a gap of about fifty miles over the mountains to be negotiated by carriage.

The Adana Railway traverses the rich plain that lies at the southern foot of the Taurus, running through miles of fields of the cotton whose cultivation is the principal industry of the vilayet. Cotton and cotton seed are plentifully exported; labour, too, is plentiful, and is drawn from the unattractive mixture of races which compose the population. In the vilayet of Adana Turks are comparatively rare, especially in Mersina and its neighbourhood; most numerous are probably the *fellahîn*, Arabic-speaking descendants of Egyptian immigrants who settled in the district some generations ago. There is also a large Syrian community (in Mersina the predominant language is Arabic), there are gypsies, there are nomad Yürüks, there is even an East Indian element; while in the towns there are important communities of Greeks and Armenians, the latter slightly thinned, as regards Adana, by what the Porte, in its euphemistic way, termed the "events" of 1909.

I left the railway at Tarsus, whence the old caravan road sets forth across the pass of the Cilician Gates. Tarsus is a town of about 20,000 inhabitants, largely composed of Greeks and Armenians, and it endeavours to redeem something of its squalor by electric lighting. The remains of "S. Paul's Gate," of Roman construction, and the so-called "S. Paul's Well" alone preserve

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associations with its most renowned citizen; its sole amenity lies in a broad crescent of verdure—gardens of almond, orange and mulberry trees—which encompasses it on the east. Here I obtained a *yailieh*, one of those long, barrel-shaped, seatless Turkish carriages which, when their blinds of black oil-cloth are drawn, resemble coffins on wheels and tried, but failed, to find comfort with the help of baggage and rugs. My driver was an Anatolian Greek who knew no word of Greek except his name, which was Charálampos; for most of the Greek villagers of the interior of Asia Minor speak no language but Turkish, in which even the services of the Church are sometimes celebrated, although you may occasionally find an erudite person who writes Turkish in Greek characters.

We drove through the night and at dawn reached the "Gates" of the pass, two mighty walls of rock on whose surface some ancient conqueror, Alexander the Great, perhaps, has commemorated his passage by inscriptions now undecipherable. The pass is only wide enough for river and road, but beyond it one enters into a wide expanse of beautiful Alpine scenery where verdant valleys seem to lose themselves in all directions among the forest-clad mountains. As we drove down to the railway we encountered endless strings of caravans coming slowly towards us. They belonged to Turkish villagers from the plain who had been spending the hot months in their *yaila* (summer pasture) in the mountains and were now returning home at the approach of the cold with their families and herds of undersized but hardy cattle.

They all seemed to bear a strong resemblance

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to one another, these Cilician Turks, with their rather long noses, thin lips, small, keen eyes and closely trimmed beards. The women wore full black trousers and were unveiled; the hair of many of them was stained red with henna. The men rode sturdy little Anatolian ponies; women and children were on donkeys scarcely bigger than goats, or walked; babies were packed in crates carried by camels. The camels, with the brown Yürük saddle-bags in which their owners' household goods are packed and their bright Kurdish rugs, were delightfully picturesque and at every movement evoked lovely sounds from their deep-toned bells.

At Bozanti, about seven miles from ~~Kara~~ Puñar, the road joins the railway, which soon leaves the mountains for the bare plateau of central Anatolia. Here mile upon mile of cultivable but uncultivated land would appear to offer a splendid asylum for refugees from Macedonia; but, instead of being repeopled, the country was being drained, for a time, at all events, of much of the manhood which it possessed. From every station which I passed between Bozanti and Smyrna recruits were being collected and despatched to the headquarters of the main Turkish Army in Thrace; and I witnessed many a sight of poignant pathos as lean old sergeants in tattered uniforms, some wearing putties and slippers, others with aiguillettes of yellow cord fastened with safety-pins to where their shoulder-straps should have been, tried to marshal their squads into the train or with rough kindness to cut short harrowing farewells from aged mothers about to lose their only support. At one station a

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sturdy lad of the name of Ali was being seen off by a host of relatives. Ali's old father and venerable grandfather, grizzled peasants who had once, no doubt, been through the same business themselves, his brothers and little nephews, were clustering around him, adjuring him to take care of himself and to write soon. Behind the men stood four old women, crying as if their hearts would break and wiping their tears with the ends of the *charshaf* with which they covered their wrinkled faces, as they besought Allah to grant the boy a safe return. The least affected of the party was Ali himself. "*In sha Allah*," "if God will," and "*aghlama*," "don't cry," was all he said; and soon after we left the station I saw him sitting in the next carriage to mine, contentedly eating cheese and grapes with his new companions. But I shall not soon forget the despairing wail of the old women as the train steamed slowly away.

Half-way between Bozanti and Konia is Karaman, once the capital of a Turkish dynasty which has given its name to the town and to all the southern coast of Asia Minor. On an eminence behind the station stands its picturesque mediæval castle; on the station platform itself some Khojas were making their mid-day *namaz*.<sup>1</sup> Late in the evening, past gardens and plantations, the train steamed into Konia; and the handsome modern station offered the interesting sight of an officer trying to collect together his band of ragged conscripts, while fierce Bosnians and Albanians squatted and smoked with a group of prisoners chained heavily by the neck and spectacled old Dancing Der-

<sup>1</sup> The five daily prayers obligatory on all Moslems.

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vishes sought anxiously for their carpet bags in the van.

### 2

Konia, the ancient Iconium, possesses two claims to fame which place it in a category apart from all other large towns of Asia Minor and render the fact that it is the capital of an extensive vilayet relatively unimportant. During a flourishing epoch which endured from the end of the eleventh to the beginning of the fourteenth century it was the nucleus of a brilliant independent state, the seat of the Seljuq Sultans of Rûm;<sup>1</sup> and it has preserved from its Seljuq Sultans, pre-eminent among rulers of Turkish race as patrons of art, a series of monuments from whose crumbling tiles and ~~decaying~~ porticos there still flickers a spark of the departed genius. Secondly, it contains the tomb of one of the holiest Sheikhs of Islam, the mystic Jelal ed-Dîn er-Rûmî, author of the *Mesnevi* and of a celebrated *Divan* of poems and founder of the Order of Mevlevîs, better known in the West as Dancing Der-vishes. In Konia is the residence of his hereditary successors, who bear the title of Chelebi of Konia;<sup>2</sup> in Konia is the mainspring of a great brotherhood which exercises a beneficent influence in the Ottoman Empire, in the direction of tolerance and breadth of mind, by means of its thousands of lay brethren scattered through every walk of life.

<sup>1</sup> The Seljuq Sultanate of Konia was called Rûm (Rome) because it was conquered from the Byzantine Empire, which never ceased to maintain the fiction that it was Roman.

<sup>2</sup> The Chelebi is officially addressed as "The Exalted Presence of His Eminence the righteous Veled Chelebi Effendi, who sits on the sheepskin (*i.e.*, holds the office) of the Convent of the Holy Mevlana in Konia."

## THE CITY OF DANCING DERVISHES

The annals of Konia carry us back to the mists of antiquity: we read of Ikonion in the legend of Perseus and the Gorgons. Here, too, in historical times, halted Xenophon's Ten Thousand; here Cicero, Pro-Consul of Cilicia, reviewed his troops; here Paul and Barnabas preached the Gospel after their departure from Cyprus. And here, if we are to credit venerable tradition and oriental geographers, is the tomb of "Plato the Divine," who is invested in the locality, under the name of Eflat, with the attributes of a miracle-worker and a magician. But it was not until it fell into the hands of the Seljuq Turks, branch of a race usually considered to be destructive in its tendencies, that Konia attained its zenith; it was not until after their disappearance that it lapsed into provincial obscurity which, but for the Mevlevi Dervishes, would have been yet deeper. Undoubtedly the presence of the Chelebis and, latterly, the advent of the Baghdad Railway, have preserved Konia from the oblivion in which lie places like Kharput and Sivas. It is now quite a flourishing town of about 55,000 souls and in it, or at any rate within the vilayet, as the Vali related to me with pride, were made all the fittings and furniture for the Chamber of the recently created Provincial Council. It offers, moreover, an example of what is almost a phenomenon in Turkey: it is a town the majority of whose inhabitants are Turks. The vilayet of Konia is, in fact, the only province of the Empire, with the possible exception of Brusa, the mass of whose population is Turkish. Nor are its people as the Europeanized Turks whom one encounters in Constantinople; they are genuine Turks *de la*

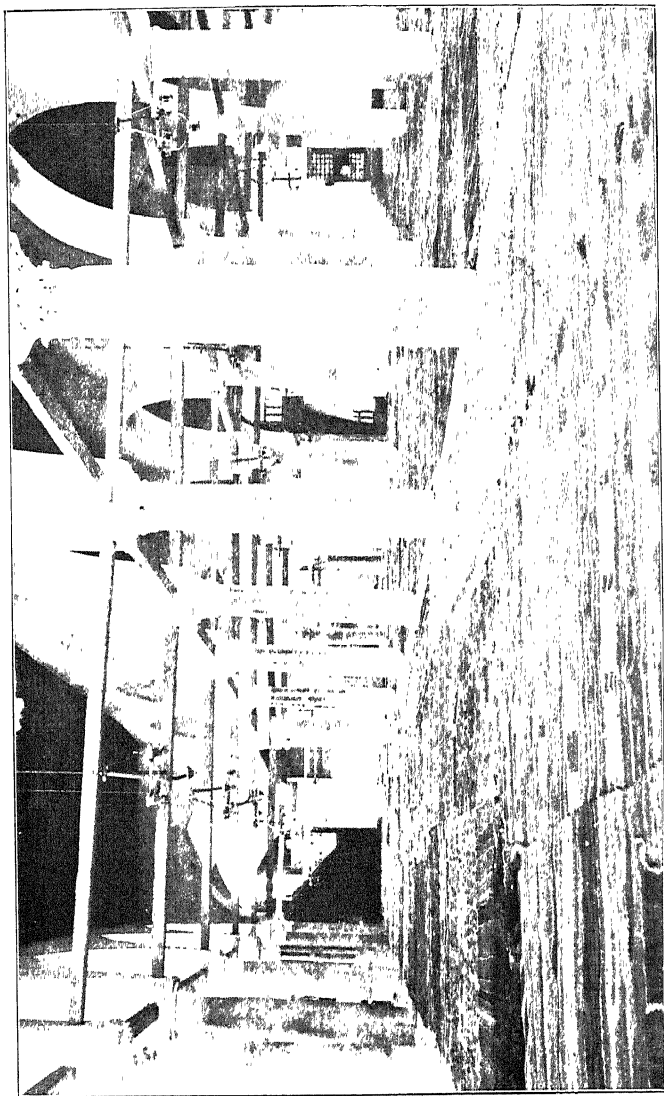


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*vieille roche*, the core and backbone of the Turkish race, people who dress as did their forefathers in the plateaux of Central Asia. The old men wear the gown, and round their fez a white or yellow turban; the younger generation affects the pretty distinctive dress of Konia, which consists of wide but not very baggy breeches, a zouave jacket of blue or dark olive-green, a broad silk *qushaq* (sash) and an exceptionally tall fez, the end of whose *püskül* (tassel) is tied within a black turban. People in fez and European clothes are almost invariably Armenian or Greek *rayahs*.

The houses of the native Christians and of the few European residents of Konia lie between the railway station and the old town; to the north of these rises the artificial mound on which were built the palace and mosque of Sultan Ala ed-Dîn. Ala ed-Dîn Kai Kobad I. was the greatest of his dynasty and a mighty builder, a veritable Seljuq Justinian; the memory of his name yet lingers in the lands over which he ruled. At the foot of the mound, above the decayed mud hovels of ancient suburbs and amid countless *türbés* of Peyghambers, Sheikhs and Pirs, are scattered his superb *medresés* (seminaries) and mosques, sadly dilapidated ruins of buildings which made Konia in the thirteenth century a seat of Islamic learning and render it to-day a treasure-house of oriental art. Pre-eminent among them stands the Karatai *medresé*, with a matchless marble portico and domed chambers of brick lined with crumbling tiles of blue. Near by is the *medresé* of the Inje Minaré, so called from a thin graceful minaret whose upper stages have unfortunately been destroyed by an earth-

PLATE X



INTERIOR OF THE MOSQUE OF SULTAN ALA ED-DIN, KONIA.



## THE CITY OF DANCING DERVISHES

quake.<sup>1</sup> A little farther away is the beautiful but ruinous Sirchali *medresé* (i.e., the "Glazed College," in allusion to its tiles), close to the Laranda Gate which represents all that is left of Ala ed-Dîn's once formidable town walls. Outside the Gate is the Mosque of Sahib Ata, with two sumptuous porches; it contains a *türbé* of the pious founder and his family, embellished with the best preserved tiles in Konia.

Of the palace of the Sultans of Rûm on the mound there only remains a tower of mud bricks, standing precariously below the Mosque of Ala ed-Dîn. The mosque, however, is in admirable preservation, and on its interesting outer wall is a series of contemporary inscriptions, the first of which runs as follows :

*Hath commanded the completion of this blessed mosque the mighty Sultan, Glory of the world and of the Faith, the victorious, Kai Kobad, son of the martyr Sultan Kai Khosrau I., son of Kiliç Arslan II., the Proof of the Prince of Believers.*

The interior has lost the tiled frame of its *qibleh*,<sup>2</sup> which has been removed to the Imperial Museum in Constantinople and replaced by a painted imitation; otherwise it has undergone but little alteration since the days of its builder. It is of the type of the Omayyad Mosque of Cordova, and forty-two columns with a great variety of capitals support its low flat roof. So spacious is the mosque that lately 2000 soldiers recruited in the district were quartered inside it for three months before being

<sup>1</sup> For a drawing of this mosque, made before the partial destruction of its minaret, cf. Cl. Huart, *Konia*, Paris, 1897.

<sup>2</sup> Point or direction of adoration in mosques and in Islam generally.

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

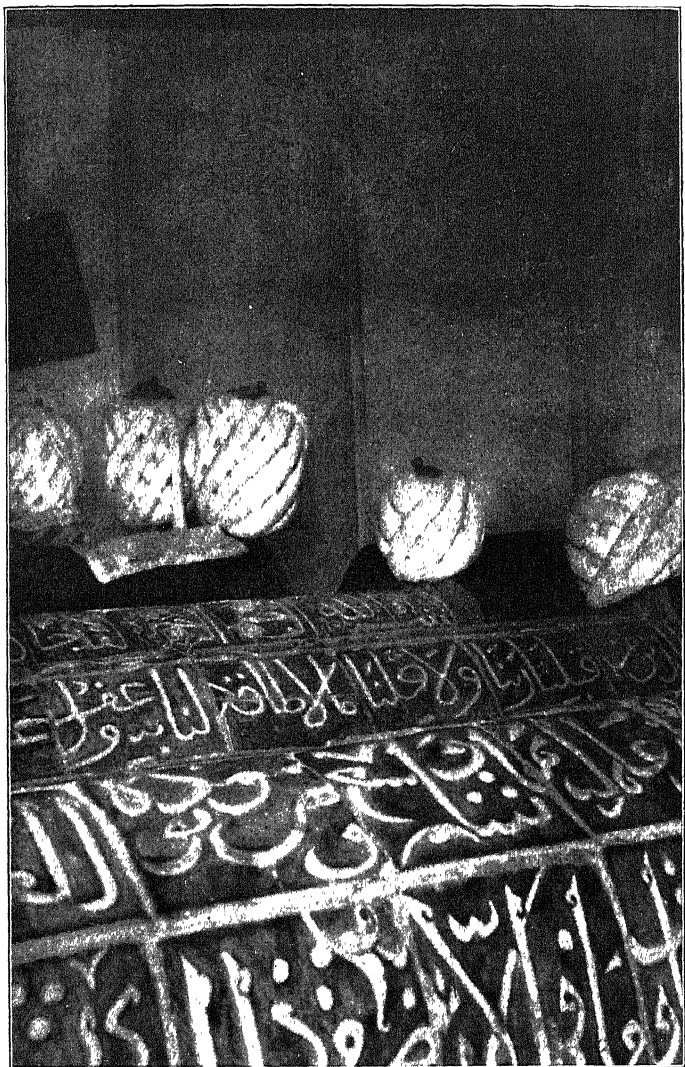
sent to Chatalja, and would to heaven that some other barracks had been selected ! It is asserted, and I can vouch from experience for the fact that the assertion is not made without reason, that the potentate known as Sultan al-Baraghât, the King of the Fleas, holds his court in the town of Tiberias ; but he must have appointed an exceedingly capable lieutenant to the Mosque of Ala ed-Dîn. Even Cyprus, at the height of its flea season, can produce nothing to match the hordes which swarmed from the floor and carpets of the mosque over the persons of its unsuspecting visitors. A poor Armenian bishop who happened to be in the mosque at the same time as myself flapped his robes in wildest agitation ; I rushed in despair to the nearest Turkish bath.

The forbears of Ala ed-Dîn rest in eight tombs of faience in a *türbé* adjoining the mosque. It is a charming little sanctuary, the quintessence of a bygone East, a refuge of peace enshrining the remains of makers of history now all but forgotten. And over it rises one of those pyramidical domes which are distinctive of Koniote architecture, its tapering octagon a landmark in all the country around.

### 3

A pyramid similar to that which covers the remains of the Sultans of Rûm surmounts the sumptuous tomb of Hazreti Mevlana, "Our Holy Lord," the Sheikh Jelal ed-Dîn of blessed memory. With its facing of green faience it is the most arresting object in Konia and draws general atten-

PLATE XI



THE SULTANS OF RÛM.

*To face page 102.*



## THE CITY OF DANCING DERVISHES

tion to the great Mevlevi-khané, the central convent of the dancing dervishes.

Jelal ed-Dîn was a native of Balkh in what is now Afghanistan, and with his father came to Konia early in the thirteenth century at the invitation of Sultan Ala ed-Dîn. Here he became acquainted with the Sheikh Shems ed-Dîn, a Persian Sufi<sup>1</sup> who dwelt in Konia in the odour of sanctity, and from him is said to have imbibed the Pantheistic doctrines which he subsequently set forth with much poetic feeling in his celebrated work, the *Mesnevî*. The purpose of all Sufi teaching is to enable the devout soul to return to and be reunited with God, with Whom it was once one but from Whom it has become separated by its birth into the world. The return journey to God is made along a "way" or "road" (*tariq*), whereby one of the dervish orders is to be understood; the stages of the "way" are represented by the *zîkr*, that is to say the ritual (differing in every Order) designed to produce the state of ecstasy wherein the mind is withdrawn from earthly things and brought into closer communion with the Divine. The *zîkr* which Jelal ed-Dîn instituted in his Order to attain this end consists of whirling around to the music of flutes and drums; the other characteristic of the Mevlevîs (as, indeed, of dervishes in general) is the wide tolerance they display towards people and life in general.

A low entrance protected by hanging chains leads into the quadrangle of the Mevlevi-khané. On either side of the gate is a row of little cubicles inhabited by the resident dervishes, each cubicle

<sup>1</sup> A type of Moslem mystic.



## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

surmounted by a picturesque leaden dome, the domes, again, separated by graceful hexagonal chimneys. In the middle of the court is a fountain, beside which a cluster of tombstones of deceased dervishes gleams in the sunlight; to the right are the refectory and common room of the living. The quadrangle is bounded at its far end by a large, richly ornamented building, or group of buildings, under whose many domes is contained every spiritual requisite of the order. Here is the tomb of Jelal ed-Dîn, with those of his father and all his successors; next to these is a mosque for the performance of the ordinary *namaz*; beside it is the *sema-kehané*, the dancing-room, where the *zikir* (called *muqabilé*, "meeting") is performed.

I had brought letters of introduction to the Chelebi Effendi from the Vali of Konia, from the hereditary Sheikh of the Mevlevi *tekyé* in Cyprus and from other Turkish dignitaries, and I was ushered by a swarthy dervish from Angora into his Eminence's apartments. These are situated at the right of the entrance gate and do not differ in size from the cells of the ordinary brethren. They are so low that an exceptionally tall man would be obliged to stoop inside them; on entering them one seemed to be transported into a scene from mediæval Persia as depicted in some illuminated manuscript of Behzâd of Herat. First I passed into a tiny yellow ante-room, whose most prominent object was a stove of Persian faience; this room gave access to an inner chamber filled with broad divans. The divans, which were raised barely a foot from the floor, were covered, like the floor, with costly stuffs; and on one of them, on a sheepskin rug,

## THE CITY OF DANCING DERVISHES

there reclined one of the holiest personages of the Moslem world, the holder of a dignity which commands profound veneration far beyond the confines of the brotherhood immediately subject to it. On another divan, opposite the Chelebi, squatted the Vekil, his second in command, writing, on his hand, a letter at the Chelebi's dictation. On one of the walls hung a representation of the high Mevlevi cap of camel hair, on the others a number of *ayets* (illuminated texts), admirable specimens of oriental calligraphy; in a corner was heaped a pile of leather-bound volumes.

The blood of the mystic and philosopher-poet of Balkh would appear to flow with scarcely diminished purity in the veins of his successor and descendant of the present day. The thirty-ninth or fortieth Chelebi of Konia (his Eminence could not remember precisely which) looks as much a part of an old Persian miniature as do his surroundings. He is a man of about fifty, grave and amiable, with dark beard and features of high-bred Persian cast; the dignity of his presence was enhanced by his costume, a violet gown worn over a dark-green cassock. On his head he wore the cap of the Order, encircled by a green turban. The green turban is the attribute of the Mevlevi Sheikhs and if, as was the Chelebi's, its lower side is tucked within the cap it is a sign that the wearer is a descendant of Hazreti Mevlana himself.

His Eminence is a distinguished scholar and man of letters, well versed in the two languages, Arabic and Persian, from which literary Turkish has so copiously borrowed. It is a remarkable fact that while the spoken Turkish of the people contains

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

relatively few foreign words and is concise and laconic to the verge of ambiguity, the literary language becomes ambiguous for precisely the opposite reason. It teems with repetitions, with laboured circumlocutions, with endless gerundival clauses; it revels in elaborate Persian and Arabic phrases completely unintelligible to a Turk of only moderate erudition. The very word *Chelebi*, which has had a chequered and interesting history, is of Arabic origin. A Turkish corruption of the Arabic *salib*, a crucifix, it was applied, centuries ago, by the Turkish tribes of Central Asia to the only Christians with whom they were wont to come in contact, to the Nestorian priests who during the Middle Ages showed such astonishing missionary activity by carrying their faith into India, Siberia and even into China.<sup>1</sup> And as these Nestorians were usually men of learning the appellation was gradually extended by the Turks to any cultured Christians, and from them to cultured people in general. At the present time it is given, as a rule, to European gentlemen of a certain standing and has even been applied to the writer by an over-polite Turk. It is, therefore, a strange anomaly that a designation eminently Christian in etymology and application should be the title of one who, next to the Khalif, may be regarded as the nearest approach to a sort of Sunni Pope.

To continue the metaphor of the *Chelebi* as a Sunni Pope—it is, of course, only true in the vaguest

<sup>1</sup> This is the derivation which was given to me by the *Chelebi Effendi*. Many Orientalists prefer the derivation from *chalab*, an archaic Turkish word meaning "God." Cf. the *Encyclopædia of Islam*, vol. i., pp. 831-33.

PLATE XII



THE CHELEBI OF KONIA.

The picture in the oval frame represents the Chelebi's headdress. His signature is reproduced below.

ابراهيم خضر مولانا  
 محمد احمد محمد زاده  
 قندهار در ۱۳۰۰  
 في الماستر



## THE CITY OF DANCING DERVISHES

sense—it should be explained that it is his function to gird each Sultan of Turkey on his accession with the historic sword of Osman. This ceremony is performed in the sacred Mosque of Eyub in Constantinople, to which no Christian is admitted and, in view of its reputed origin, cannot fail to suggest the analogy of the coronation by the Pope of the Holy Roman Emperor. It is said to have originated in the presentation by Ala ed-Dîn to the Turkish conqueror Osman of a sword which he despatched, possibly in token of investiture, by his friend Jelal ed-Dîn. The story is evidently inaccurate as regards detail, since the three personages can hardly have been contemporaries, but there is no reason why it should not be true in substance. It would be a very natural thing for one of the Seljuq Sultans, then the most powerful of Turkish sovereigns, to congratulate the leader of a kindred tribe upon his victories over the Greeks and to send him a sword of honour by the most distinguished man at his Court.

### 4

Sir Charles Eliot remarks in *Turkey in Europe* that Jelal ed-Dîn “was passionately devoted to music and, like Luther, did not see why the devil should have all the good tunes.” Jelal ed-Dîn recognized in music man’s ally in his search for reunion with the Infinite; in a passage of rare charm the *Mesnevi* suggests to the soul sorrowful how it may hope to attain its goal with the kindly help of the flute :

*Hearken to the pipe of reed, to what she recounts, to the sound of her plaint at the loneliness of the soul.*

*“Since the day I was cut,” she says, “from among the reeds of*

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

*the marshes, men and women weep at the sound of my voice. My breast swells as I strive to give utterance to my sighs, and to express the pangs of my yearning for my home. For all they who are far from home ever long for the day of return to whence they came.*

*"On behalf of the multitude do I pour forth my song; I am the companion of the happy and the sad. My notes are interpreted in accordance with the dictates of men's hearts, yet it is not given to all men to discover the secrets of my heart. My secrets are manifest in my plaintive song, but are not revealed to the earthly ear. Body is not veiled from soul, neither is soul from body, yet what man hath set eyes upon a soul?"*

*This voice of the flute, it is of fire and not of wind; may he who has not the fire be accounted as one that is not. For as the ferment of love possesses the wine, so does the fire of love give inspiration to the flute. The flute is the confidant of unhappy lovers; <sup>1</sup> in its strains are laid bare the secrets of my heart.*

And so, twice a month, after Friday Mosque, do the Mevlevis of Konia whirl into ecstacy to the voice of the flute of reed. In Constantinople and other great cities frequented by tourists the ceremony is apt at times to degenerate into a spectacle provided for the curious; in smaller places, although its solemnity as an act of devotion is convincing and impressive, the resources of the *tekyé* rarely permit of much outward *apparatus*. In Konia are combined the merits of great and small places. The *sema-khané* in the shadow of the Founder's tomb provides as dignified a *mise-en-scène* as any ritual can require; in no distant townlet could the solemnity of the proceedings be surpassed. During the hour or so that the *zikr* is in progress the spectators stand with hands folded over their stomachs, the conventional attitude of reverence; I noticed that some were moved to tears by its mystical appeal.

<sup>1</sup> The words "love" and "lover" are used here, as in the Song of Solomon, in an allegorical sense. The lover is the creature longing for reunion with the Creator.

## THE CITY OF DANCING DERVISHES

One by one the dervishes filed into the room, about thirty in all, men of all ages and from every part of the Sunni world. Presently the Chelebi, with the other members of the hierarchy of the Order, entered from the side of the tomb and sat just beyond the dancing-floor, while a precentor chanted in doleful Dorian mode portions of the *Mesnevi* in the original Persian. After some prayers they passed in procession into the *sema-khané*, followed by the dervishes in order of seniority; as each passed the point behind which was the Founder's tomb he turned and bowed to the man who followed. Three times the dervishes processed around the room. Then, as the Chelebi went to his allotted place, the dervishes who composed the band repaired to a raised platform where their flutes and drums were in readiness, while the others threw off the cloaks which covered their dancing dress of long, pleated skirt and zouave jacket, green or white. The flutes broke into a melancholy wailing tune and the dancers proceeded to revolve, their skirts opening with the motion like those of a ballerina. For twenty minutes or so they continued, while one of the senior dervishes, whose function was evidently to supervise, walked about among the dancers like a sort of drill sergeant, seeing that all was well. Then a pause; then a fresh tune, rather like a catchy Italian waltz. Another pause, and the musicians struck up music more weirdly melancholy than that which they had played at first. This was the tune set apart for the rare occasions when the Chelebi himself deigns to dance, and a noticeable thrill went through the assembly as the Chelebi moved slowly into the middle of the floor and, with



## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

a dignity which few Occidentals could emulate, none, certainly, in the same circumstances, became the pivot around which the others gyrated. After the ceremony I overheard a man, evidently a well-to-do countryman, say to his neighbour: "Do you know what I was thinking when the Chelebi Effendi began to dance? I thought he was going to fly."

At the end of the service the precentor intoned a lengthy bidding prayer to commemorate the Founder and his successors, and closed with supplications for the present ruler of Turkey: "es-Sultan ibn Sultan ibn Sultan,<sup>1</sup> Mehmed Reshad Khan." Upon these he dwelt with particular emphasis, for Sultan Reshad, probably the most devout sovereign who has sat on the throne of Osman, is himself a Mevlevi, the most distinguished lay-brother of the Order; in the long period before his accession during which he was confined to his palace by Abdul Hamid he steeped himself in the precepts and philosophy of Jelal ed-Dîn er-Rûmî. So I was told by the Chelebi himself, who knows his Majesty well. The Chelebi had lived in Constantinople for twenty-five years before succeeding his cousin, the late Chelebi, and was full of praise for the piety of his Imperial fellow-dervish.

Before the Chelebi and his officers retired from the building they spent some minutes in prayer at the tombs of Jelal ed-Dîn and his successors. That

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* "The Sultan, son of a Sultan who was son of a Sultan." Mehmed V was a son of Sultan Abdul Mejid, who was a son of Sultan Mahmud II. In view of the principles regulating the Turkish succession, according to which the heir is the oldest male agnate, it has been a somewhat rare occurrence for a Sultan to be both the son and the grandson of a reigning monarch.

## THE CITY OF DANCING DERVISHES

of the Founder is covered with a magnificent pall of green satin, heavily embroidered with gold, and lies in a chamber or chapel decorated with sumptuous but subdued magnificence. Thick columns covered with gesso and coloured deep red and gold support the dome; the walls are similarly decorated. Silver steps, kissed by the faithful, lead to the solid silver balustrade which encloses the chapel; above it hang heavy silver lamps. To the left is the imposing tomb of Jelal ed-Dîn's father, Beha ed-Dîn, who is buried erect, as he died. The story relates that, as he lay on his death-bed, Mohammed descended from heaven to visit him; Beha ed-Dîn raised himself with a supreme effort to receive his august visitor and, so doing, expired. The other tombs lie beneath stalactite vaults and are almost equally rich. Many are covered with priceless Kashmir shawls of the finest workmanship, others with satin palls; all are surmounted by the dervish caps of their occupants. The combined effect of this necropolis of the oldest dynasty in Turkey is one of restrained and impressive splendour.

On either side of the entrance gate, each in their separate apartments, the Chelebi and his Vekil were now holding a sort of levée. Shoeless and in deferential attitude there sat with the Chelebi two Government officials, a Sheikh of the Bektash Dervishes just arrived from Constantinople and a wealthy landowner of Daghestan who had come to Konia from his distant home to see something of the West! After I had joined them and had consumed my cup of coffee, his Eminence invited me to dine with him at noon on the following day at his country residence in Meram, the summer resort to

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

whose copious springs Konia probably owes its foundation. So on the morrow I drove along six miles of shady avenue to a large, simple Turkish country house, set amid leafy arbours, green meadows, wide kitchen gardens and the sound of running waters. The atmosphere of the place was totally different from the Persian mediævalism of the Konia convent. The ecclesiastical element was absent; one felt one was in the pleasure of a Turkish *grand seigneur* of the eighteenth century. This was no monkish dwelling but the manor of some old Dere-beyi,<sup>1</sup> one of those feudal landowners who once divided the soil of Turkey between them but have disappeared from Asia and only survive (with abrogated political privileges) in the regions of Bosnia and Albania. On the soft turf, under the shade of poplar trees, a table was spread, and for nearly two hours a dervish attendant brought and removed a bewildering number of viands, all contained in metal dishes from which one helped oneself directly with one's fork. The order of the courses was something as follows, meats, vegetables and sweet dishes being interspersed with delightful inconsequence :

- Grilled pieces of mutton (*kebab*).
- Meat patties (*bürek*).
- A sweet pastry with honey (*baqlawa*).
- Stuffed *aubergines*.
- Vegetable marrows stuffed with rice.
- Stuffed tomatoes.
- A sweet rice pudding with cream.
- Stewed okras.
- A sauté of mutton and vegetables.
- Pilav.
- Pears stewed in their skins.
- Melons.

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<sup>1</sup> *Lit.*, "Lord of the Valley."

PLATE XIII



OUTSIDE THE MOSQUE OF SAHIB ATA, KONIA.

*To face page 112.*



## THE CITY OF DANCING DERVISHES

In addition there were side dishes of cheese, salad and pimentos. A certain historical interest attaches to the pilav, which was sweetish and flavoured with the curious combination of beans and currants. The dish is traditional among the Mevlevis, having been made in precisely the same proportions and cooked for precisely the same number of minutes daily for six centuries. It is the pilav which was always prepared for Hazreti<sup>1</sup> Mevlana by his faithful cook, whose *türbê* is still to be seen in a grove of reeds by one of the streams of Meram.

And, since I have reverted to the reed, to the emblem of the Mevlevi Dervishes, I would conclude with the mystical account of its sacred origin as preserved in the traditions of the Order.

The Prophet Mohammed once entrusted to his son-in-law Ali certain holy mysteries of the faith, enjoining upon him to reveal them to none but the initiated. For the space of forty days Ali locked the secrets within his heart but in so doing he was much troubled, so that he fell ill and began to swell. He fled, therefore, into the wilderness, where he chanced to come upon a well. Unable any longer to contain the holy mysteries, he leaned over the mouth of the well and confided them to the bowels of the earth. With the excitement of pronouncing the portentous words his mouth filled with froth and foam, which he spat into the well, and immediately he felt relief.

After a number of days a single reed shot up from the well. A shepherd boy, miraculously enlightened by God, saw the reed and cut it. He drilled seven holes in its side and upon it, as he pastured his flock,

<sup>1</sup> A Turkish title of respect.

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

he played the sweet melodies which afterwards were played by the Lord Jelal ed-Dîn. Presently the wind carried the sounds of his music abroad and the tribes of the desert, hearing them faintly from afar, came near that they might listen, bringing their flocks with them. Whenever the shepherd boy played, even the camels and the sheep ceased from pasturing, entranced by the sweet notes of the flute.

And when word was brought to the Prophet Mohammed of the musician who had arisen in the desert, he declared that in the notes of the flute lay the interpretation of the divine secrets confided to Hazreti Ali, and that thereafter the flute should be the companion and comforter of man.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE TURKISH JESTER

#### I

THE works of Turkish authors are not, in general, appropriate for those in search of light reading. To compose a book in their ornate and cumbrous style must be rather like grappling with a prolonged series of jigsaw puzzles; the perusal of such a volume may be likened to a surgical operation and is consequently not often undertaken. The only book which the average Turk has constantly at his hand is the Qoran, into which even the shopkeeper dips in the intervals of selling his wares; but, as the Qoran is written in Arabic and in archaic Arabic to boot, he reads it as a pious exercise and not in the expectation of being able to understand it. There exists, however, in Turkey another class of literature, which differs from the ponderous works of poets and historians as Klephtic ballads differ from the turgid efforts of modern Greek prose writers. This class supplies the literary wants of the masses and is more widely circulated by recitation than by the printing press. It consists of the dialogues associated with the names of Karagyöz and Haji Aivat, of folk tales and fables, of songs and jokes; its most characteristic product is the classical exponent of Turkish humour, the Khoja <sup>1</sup> Nasr ed-Dîn.

<sup>1</sup> The word Khoja, more properly transliterated Khwaja but



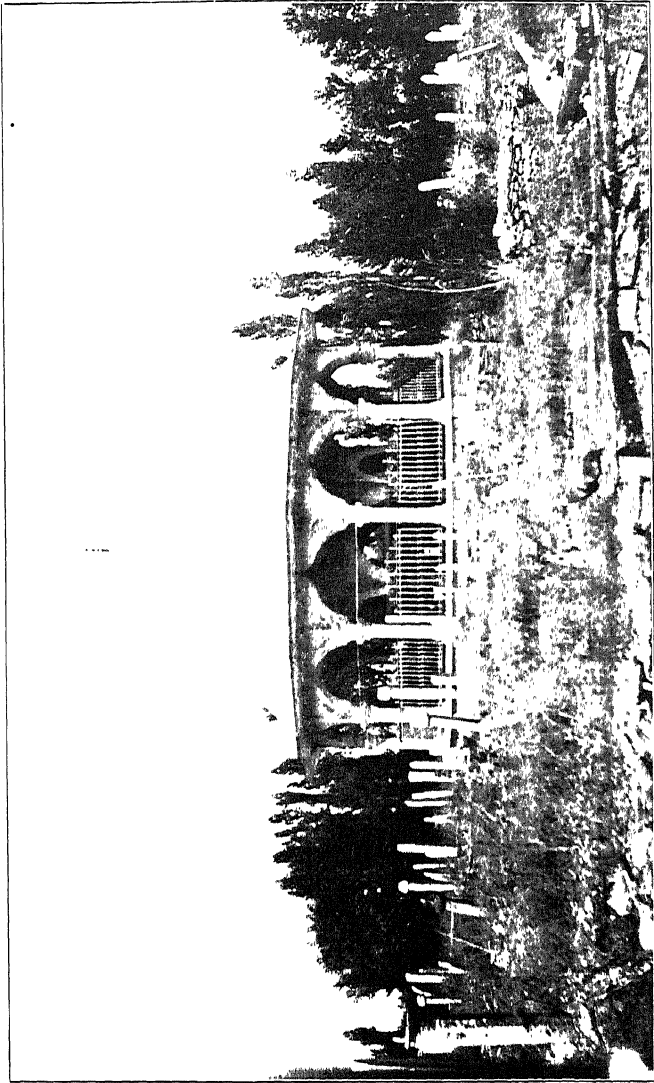
## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

The Khoja was an Imâm, a sort of country parson, who lived some 500 years ago at Aqshehir in Asia Minor; yet it is not to sanctity or learning that his celebrity is due. Of these attributes he had but little store. His character was a curious blend of cunning and naïveté, of buffoonery and shrewdness; his main occupation in life to score off other people and to play harmless practical jokes. In pursuit of this object he became the author or hero of countless adventures and *jeux d'esprit*, which are related in houses and coffee-shops wherever Turkish is spoken, as well as the peg on which similar tales of later invention are hung. Some of the Khoja's adventures are really funny, some depend for their humour on Turkish puns and thus lose their point when translated, some are too Rabelaisian to bear publication. But, as the jokes of five centuries have been fathered on to the Khoja, he must not be held responsible for all that bear his name.

Aqshehir lies about 110 miles from Konia, in the direction of Afium Karahissar, and I made a pilgrimage to the pretty and eminently Turkish little town to see the Khoja's grave and to glean, if possible, at its source some fresh emanation of his genius. "The White Town" is situated very picturesquely at the foot of the Sultan Dag, at the very spot where a deep cleft or valley cuts into the mountain. A river flows down the valley and, on entering the town, separates into many streams, which run along the streets. Such part of the river as is not carried

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pronounced in Turkish as it is spelled here, means a school-master, a teacher, especially of the *ulema* class, a teacher of divinity.



THE TOMB OF KHOJA NASR ED-DIN, AQSHEHIR.



## THE TURKISH JESTER

off in this manner finds its way into a stony bed and becomes one of the boundaries of the graveyard just below the town. Here rests our friend the Khoja, in a conspicuous and recently restored mausoleum of marble, gleaming against a background of mosques and minarets and the brown and green tints of the Sultan Dagħ. It is believed by many people that a gate without any walls gives access to the tomb, a belief which, although erroneous, is justified by other of the Khoja's whimsicalities. At his request a small hole has been left in the masonry of the tomb so that he can continue to look out upon the world; over the grave, ready for instant use, hang the ball with which he played and the lock of his house, which he refused to entrust to his wife, who lies beside him. The inscription is as follows :

THE TOMB OF THE DECEASED AND PARDONED,  
THE REVEREND NASR ED-DÎN EFFENDI,  
IN NEED OF THE MERCY OF GOD,  
THE COMPASSIONATE.  
RECITE THE *FATIHA*  
FOR HIS SOUL,  
386.

Even here he played a joke upon the world, for A.H. 386 is equivalent to about A.D. 996, whereas the old reprobate was, as we know, a contemporary of "Lame-Iron," Timur-lenk, who died in 1405. The Mongol invader made a sort of Court jester of the Khoja and figures in many of his stories, as the following examples will show :

Timur-lenk was not only lame; he had also lost an eye and was very ugly into the bargain. One day, as he sat conversing with the Khoja and his

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

courtiers, he chanced to scratch his head, whereupon, noticing that his hair was rather long, he called for the barber. The barber shaved his head and, when he had finished, handed him a mirror. Timur studied his features attentively for a while, then, dismayed by his ugliness, began to weep. At once all present proceeded to weep in sympathy with their master. Presently, by means of jokes and stories, the courtiers succeeded in rousing Timur from his grief; but the Khoja wept all the more loudly.

Timur looked at him in astonishment and asked him the cause of his sorrow. "I wept with reason," he said, "at beholding my ugliness, I the Lord of so many lands, the master of countless slaves. But I do not understand why you should thus despair."

"If you, my Lord," replied the Khoja, "wept for two hours after seeing yourself in the mirror for but an instant, is it not natural that I, who see you all day long, should weep longer than you?"

On hearing this answer Timur burst into uncontrollable laughter, and the Khoja, in order to render himself yet more agreeable, proceeded to a neighbouring village celebrated for the quality of its geese and cooked a goose as a present for him. But on his way back he became hungry, pulled off one of the goose's legs and ate it. When he presented the bird, Timur, indignant at the Khoja's effrontery, asked what had become of the missing leg.

"In our country," said the Khoja, "geese have only one leg. If you don't believe me, look at that flock of geese over there, by the pond."

## THE TURKISH JESTER

And he pointed at a number of geese, who, as it happened, were all standing on one leg. At once Timur ordered a drum to be beaten, and the noise so startled the birds that they instantly put down the other leg.

"You see," said Timur to the Khoja, "that they are now standing on two legs."

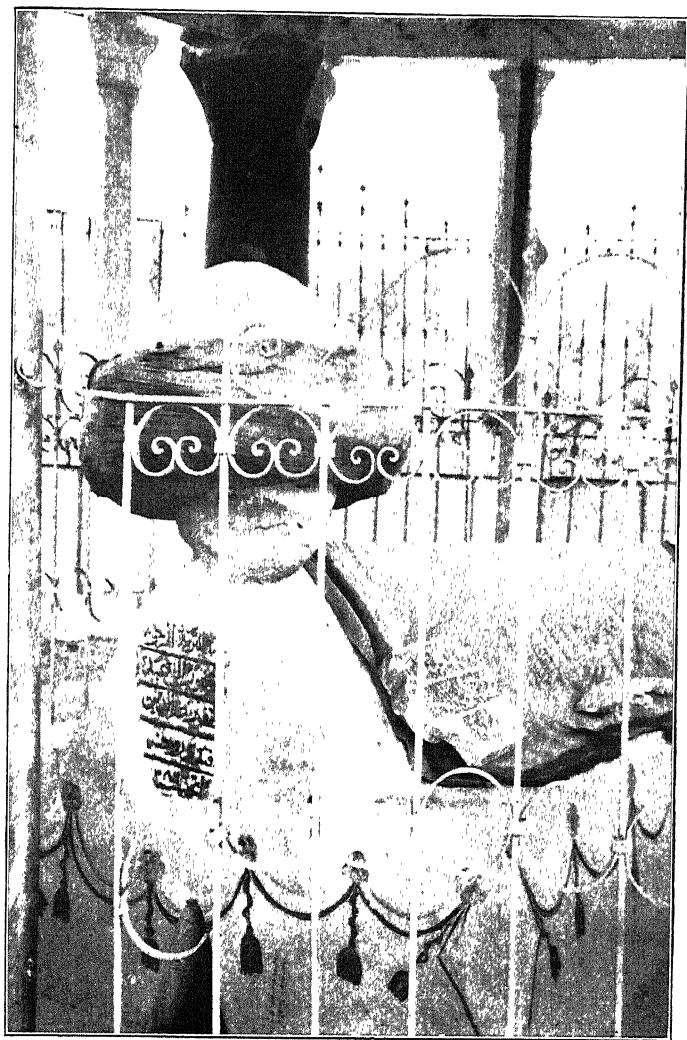
"Yes, and I daresay," replied he, "that, if the drum were only beaten loud enough, you could be made to stand on all fours."

In his lifetime the Khoja affected an enormous cap stuffed with cotton, of an obsolete shape which resembles a melon and is called by the Turks *qavnuq*; in death this covering still lies above his head. Now, however, it is more gigantic than ever because pious visitors are in the habit of adding successive layers of cloth as those below wear out. The Khoja enjoys, as is natural, great vogue in Aqshehir. While I was at the tomb, three lads who had just been called to the colours came up to invoke the Khoja's blessing and to register wishes, which are believed to come true. On Fridays and festivals the grave is decked with a handsome satin pall, the gift of an Aqshehir company in some regiment. Moreover, at the two Bairams all the Moslems of the town repair to the mausoleum, and on these occasions its custodian receives the small donations of which his stipend consists. His office is hereditary in the Khoja's family, and has been so from the time when "the memory of man runneth not to the contrary," but early in the nineteenth century, on the death of one of his predecessors, the succession was in danger of being broken. It was suddenly discovered that the *firman*

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

by which the post was held was missing, and several claimants came forward in addition to the present holder's grandfather, who was the person properly entitled to it. Unfortunately the rightful heir lacked the document whereby to prove his claim, so the only thing for him to do was to go to Constantinople and make a personal appeal to the Sultan. Accordingly, he set out on his pony and eventually arrived one evening at the Seraglio Gate in Stambul. The story that follows is well known but, as I had it from its hero's grandson at the foot of the Khoja's grave, its repetition here will perhaps be forgiven. On arrival, our friend proceeded to tie up his pony and then sought lodging in a *khân*. But in the dark he had tied the beast by mistake to one of the large drums used by the Janissaries, and soon the animal discovered that it was attached to something movable and began to kick about. It naturally made a fearful din and, as this happened at the very time that Sultan Mahmud II. was contemplating the extermination of the Janissaries (actually carried out in 1826), the utmost excitement ensued. The Sultan thought the Janissaries were rising, the Janissaries thought the Sultan had given orders for their massacre; and it was not for some time that the innocent cause of the commotion was discovered. No farther evidence was required as to his descent from the Khoja; the *firman* was granted at once.

Equally convincing is the claim of the present custodian, his grandson. The artist who illustrated the Turkish edition of the Khoja's adventures has undoubtedly taken as the model for his hero the droll little person who now tends his illustrious



THE KHOJA'S GRAVE.

Observe the Khoja's window below the inscription.

*To face page 120.*





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forbear's shrine, clad after the whimsical fashion of the genial Nasr ed-Dîn. In his tiny hut beside the tomb I sat and drank coffee as with twinkling eye and the gifts of a born *raconteur* this chip of the old block related "Khoja stories" for many hours without tiring, stories which follow, interspersed with others that I have gleaned at various times in the course of previous wanderings in the Levant. The hut consisted of one small room, and its only contents were a board which did service as a bed, the much worn and perforated fragment of an ancient rug and, running around the walls, a shelf on which were ranged the old fellow's scanty store of pots and pans and cups. I asked him how the old rug had come into his possession, whereupon he told me the following story :

"By some misfortune," he said, "Khoja Nasr ed-Dîn once fell into great poverty, and was obliged to ask his neighbours for a little corn wherewith to feed himself and his family. But the neighbours refused to help him, so Nasr ed-Dîn Effendi be-thought himself how to repay them for their uncharitableness. Now it was the winnowing season, when the people of Aqshehir are dependent upon the wind from the valley of the Sultan Dag behind us ; and across this valley Khoja Nasr ed-Dîn proceeded to stretch the very rug which you see here. Then he prayed to God that He would suffer the rug to hold up the wind, and God granted his prayer. The wind ceased, and the people were unable to proceed with their winnowing.

"An old woman went up the valley to see what was the matter, and found Khoja Nasr ed-Dîn sitting beside his rug.

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

“ ‘What has happened to the wind, Khoja?’ she asked.

“ ‘I have stopped it with this rug to punish you folk for your greed,’ replied he.

“ ‘The old woman, who feared much to lose her grain, begged earnestly that he would make an exception in her favour.

“ ‘I will give you two kilés<sup>1</sup> of barley, Khoja Effendi,’ she pleaded, ‘for a blast no thicker than your finger.’

“ ‘Very well,’ replied he; ‘go home, and the wind shall follow.’

“ Thereupon he poked a finger through the rug, and instantly a small current of wind, one finger’s worth, passed over her winnowing floor, and over hers alone.

“ ‘Soon the old woman’s neighbours discovered that she was winnowing, and came in haste to ask how she had obtained the wind.

“ ‘I bought it from Khoja Nasr ed-Dîn up there,’ she announced, ‘for two kilés of barley.’

“ ‘Bosh,’<sup>2</sup> they said; ‘how can the Khoja sell wind?’

“ ‘Go and see for yourselves if you don’t believe me,’ she retorted; and in due course they all bought wind from Khoja Nasr ed-Dîn for many kilés of grain.

“ ‘From this store,’ concluded the old man, ‘Khoja Nasr ed-Dîn Effendi gave generously to

<sup>1</sup> An Arabic and Turkish measure of capacity, having no connexion with any metrical system; a bushel.

<sup>2</sup> The literal meaning of the Turkish word *bosh* is “empty.” Hence its secondary meaning “nonsense,” with which it has passed into English parlance.

## THE TURKISH JESTER

the poor; and you will now understand why my rug is so full of holes."

I have remarked above that the Khoja's main occupation in life was to score off other people and to play practical jokes on all and sundry. He was no respecter of persons, and the great ones of the land, not excepting, as we have seen, the dreaded Timur-lenk himself, were the victims of his drolleries as much as his humbler friends and neighbours and his long-suffering and all too patient wife. But the Khoja's peculiar charm lies in the fact that he is as foolish as he is wise, that in all his doings buffoonery alternates with shrewdness, simplicity with guile; that the laugh is as often against him as against his victims. He is at his best, perhaps, not in trying to score off others but in defeating the aims of those who try to score off him; for it can well be believed that practices such as his tend to invite retaliation.

### 2

Although the late<sup>1</sup> Khoja Nasr ed-Dîn was no mirror of learning, he had contrived to become the oracle of his fellow-townsmen, who were wont to consult him on every sort of subject. One day a camel passed along the street in which the Khoja lived, and one of the Khoja's neighbours, who had never seen a camel before, ran to ask him what this strange beast might be.

<sup>1</sup> In the Turkish editions of the stories the Khoja is usually alluded to as *Khoja merhum*, "the late Khoja." The word *merhum* is only applied to Moslems and literally means "received into God's mercy." Cf. the Greek μακαρίτης and the German *selig*.

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

“Don’t you know what that is?” said the Khoja, who also had never seen a camel but would not betray his ignorance; “that is a hare a thousand years old.”

The man was much impressed with the Khoja’s wisdom and on the following day brought him a letter, which he asked him to read out to him. Now the Khoja could not read but was ashamed to confess the fact, so he took the letter, and began with “*azizim Effendim*, my sweet Sir,” the salutation which a friend usually employs when writing to another.

The man interrupted the Khoja with a puzzled air to point out that the communication was a demand for the payment of a bill, not a letter from a friend.

“Why did you not tell me that before?” asked the Khoja, distinctly nettled; “if I had known, I would have read it quite differently.”

Despite his intellectual preoccupations the Khoja condescended from time to time to help his wife with the housework, and in particular with the washing. But it invariably happened, much to his disgust, that on these occasions it began to rain. One day he went to buy soap in the bazaar before taking the linen to the washing-place, and said to the soap-seller, “Give me two okes<sup>1</sup> of that cheese.”

“That is soap, not cheese,” replied the dealer.

“I know that perfectly well,” retorted the Khoja, “but I call it cheese so that the rain shall not think I am going to do my washing.”

After finishing his work the Khoja came home with the intention of eating some real cheese, to

<sup>1</sup> A Turkish measure of weight:  $2\frac{4}{5}$  lbs.

## THE TURKISH JESTER

which he was much addicted, and was sorely distressed to find that a salted cheese which he had bought on the previous day had been stolen. As soon as he made the discovery he ran in haste to the well near his house, and sat down beside it.

Several hours later, a neighbour, passing by, asked him what he was doing there.

"Some one has stolen my salted cheese," said the Khoja; "and as everybody comes to the well after eating salted cheese, I shall be sure to catch the thief."

But the thief had evidently slaked his thirst elsewhere, and the Khoja's larder was empty; so he decided to plunder a neighbour's kitchen-garden. As he was stuffing turnips and cabbages and anything he could lay hands upon into a sack, the owner of the garden unexpectedly appeared and asked the Khoja what he was doing.

The frightened Khoja could think of no better excuse than that he had been blown into the garden by a terrific wind.

"But who has pulled out all these vegetables?" asked the owner.

"Surely," said the Khoja, "a wind which is strong enough to blow me here is strong enough to uproot your vegetables."

"But who put them into that sack?" persisted the owner of the garden, wondering what the Khoja would say next.

"That is just what I was trying to think," said the Khoja, "when you arrived."

The owner took the sack of vegetables and sent the Khoja away with a good beating, so that the hapless Nasr ed-Dîn trudged homeward without having replenished his larder. But, as he neared

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

his house, he noticed a dead chicken lying in the road. Looking round stealthily to see if he was observed, he picked it up and concealed it in his *kiürk* (fur-lined gown), then took it home, plucked it and cooked it and set it on the table.

But some one who had been watching him came in and said, "For shame, Khoja! That fowl is unclean; no man has killed it."

"Fool!" said the Khoja. "Do you maintain that this fowl is unclean because God has killed it and not man?"

That night, as the Khoja lay in bed, he dreamed that somebody was offering him a present of nine paras. He was not satisfied with the amount and said, "Give me ten."

Meanwhile he awoke, and found his hand empty.

Bitterly disappointed, he closed his eyes again, held out his hand and said, "I have changed my mind. I will take the nine."

The Khoja once went into the mountains to collect firewood. Having gathered as much as he wanted, he loaded it on to his donkey together with his cloak, and then said to the donkey, "You take that road, and I will take this one. Let us see which of us will return home first."

The Khoja then hastened back and asked his wife if the donkey had arrived. His wife said that she had not seen the donkey since the Khoja had left the house with him, so the Khoja, after waiting for a while, went back in search of him. He found the donkey browsing in the place where they had parted, with the firewood still on his back but without the cloak, which some thief had evidently stolen.

## THE TURKISH JESTER

In furious tones the Khoja demanded of the donkey what he had done with the cloak, but the donkey made no reply—for never yet has a beast spoken.

“Very well, then,” said the Khoja, taking the saddle off the donkey; “when you give me back my cloak I will give you back your saddle.”

And, carrying the heavy saddle himself, the Khoja led the donkey home. Just as he was putting him in the stable, a man knocked at the door of the house and asked if he might borrow the donkey. The Khoja replied that the donkey was away in the field, but at that moment the beast brayed and so betrayed its presence.

“Ah, so the donkey is here after all?” said the man.

“O fool, begone! Would'st thou believe my donkey before me?”

A few days later the donkey strayed and could not be found. The Khoja ran all over the town looking for him, at the same time exclaiming loudly, “Praise be to God!”

Some passers-by whom he had induced to help in the search asked him for what reason he was praising God thus loudly.

“I praise God,” replied the Khoja, “because I was not on the donkey's back when he disappeared, for, if I had been, we should both infallibly have been lost.”

And it is probable that the Khoja spoke the truth, to judge from his method in looking for a ring which he had lost. His wife, seeing him search for something in the street, called out, “Khoja, what are you looking for?”



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"I am trying to find my ring," he answered.

"Where did you lose it?" asked his wife.

"In the house."

"Then why are you looking for it in the street?" his wife cried out in amazement.

"Because it is dark in the house but nice and light out here."

One Friday afternoon, as the Khoja, followed by his wife, was walking by the river bank, his wife fell in and was carried away by the current.

Forthwith the Khoja began to run up-stream, crying out that his wife had fallen into the river.

"But what are you running up-stream for?" asked some passers-by; "the river must have carried your wife down-stream."

"Not at all," panted the Khoja; "you are quite mistaken. My wife has so contrary a nature that she would certainly insist on being carried up-stream."

Nevertheless, the poor woman came safely to land but was seized in the night by a severe attack of ague. She awoke the Khoja and begged him to run for the doctor, but no sooner had the Khoja left the house than she called out to him from the window not to go, as the ague had left her.

The Khoja, however, went on and said to the doctor, "My wife was taken ill and sent me to fetch you. Now she is well again, so I have come to tell you that you need not trouble to come after all."

In his younger days, before he was married, the Khoja once shared a house with a certain shoemaker, with whom he was always quarrelling. One morning, after a particularly violent altercation with his companion, he set forth to the *Defter Khagani*

## THE TURKISH JESTER

(Land Registry Office), and informed the clerk that he had decided to sell his share of the house.

“What do you want to do that for?” asked the clerk.

“Well,” said the Khoja, “this shoemaker is such a quarrelsome fellow that I cannot put up with him any longer. With the money that I shall receive for my part of the house I propose to acquire his share and buy him out.”

The Khoja had a cow who gave no milk, so he decided to put her up for auction by the public auctioneer. The next day, as he was walking through the bazaar, he passed the auctioneer, who was leading the cow and calling out, “Who will buy a fine cow, a cow whose milk is like cream?”

“Dear me!” said the Khoja to himself; “what a lucky thing it is that I heard him say that. I had no idea before that she was such a good milker. I could not possibly think of selling her now.”

And, so saying, he took the cow from the auctioneer’s hands and led her back home in triumph.

Now the cow had a calf, which the Khoja and his wife used to feed on alternate days. On one occasion the Khoja’s wife was invited to a wedding at a neighbour’s house and, as it chanced on that day to be her turn to feed the calf, she asked her husband what she had better do.

“I’ll tell you what we will do,” said the Khoja. “We will arrange that whichever of us speaks first must feed the calf to-day.”

“Agreed!” said his wife, and went off to the wedding, leaving the Khoja in the house.

Now it so happened that a band of gypsies had

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

just arrived outside the town, and the gypsy women were roving about the streets, seeing what they could steal. One of them passed by the Khoja's house and, hearing no sound within, entered and began to lay hands on everything she could find. Presently she came upon the Khoja sitting in the kitchen but, as he kept silence, she went on dismantling the house. The Khoja making no protest, she became yet bolder and finally took the Khoja's turban off his head and carried it away with the rest of the booty.

Presently the Khoja's wife returned from the wedding, bringing her husband a dish of *yakhni* (a stew of meat and vegetables) from the feast. When she opened the door and discovered the Khoja sitting bareheaded in the empty house, she cried out aghast, "But, Khoja, what has happened here?"

"You have spoken first," yelled the Khoja in great glee; "you must feed the calf to-day."

### 3

In the days of the Sultanate of Rûm Aqshehir was a town of no small importance, and after the fall of the Seljuq Sultans became the seat of an independent principality until purchased in 1381 by Sultan Murad I., the grandson of the Turkish conqueror Osman. Although not as rich in monuments as the greater Konia, it contains among a host of minor buildings of the thirteenth century, an epoch so fertile of works of art in Asia Minor, at least one not unworthy of comparison with the mosques and *medresés* of the Seljuq capital. This is the Tash *medresé*, the "Stone College," which was

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erected, as set forth in an inscription over its admirable marble porch, in the reign of "the great Sultan, the mighty King of Kings, the shadow of God in the universe, Izz ed-Dünya ve'd-Dîn (Glory of the world and of the Faith), the victorious Kai Kaus, son of Kai Khosrau, son of him who is intituled the Proof of the Prince of Believers." The interior of the *medresé*, singularly reminiscent in plan of a Byzantine basilica, is not, alas, as well preserved as the porch. The court is choked with fragments of stalactite vaulting and ancient capitals, and the mighty arch of marble at its southern end looks in imminent danger of collapse. Along each side of the court runs a row of little cubicles, like the chapels of a Christian church; but a moaning lunatic was the only living thing I saw in the cells of the erstwhile scholars. A mosque was, of course, attached to the college, and its charming minaret of brick still stands beside it, tanned by time and exposure the softest and sunniest of browns. Time has also, however, robbed it of nearly all its tiles of turquoise and sapphire blue; decay has chilled with deadening hand the once thriving university of Aqshehir. No longer do robed and turbaned *ulema* foregather within its portals; no longer do congregations await—in vain—the sermons of Khoja Nasr ed-Dîn. For without doubt our Khoja often officiated in this mosque; it is here, I suspect, that he first won fame by his skill in evading his ecclesiastical duties. He was, poor man, a most unready preacher; nothing did he dread more than the delivery of a sermon, nothing did he more earnestly seek to avoid.

One day he stood up in the pulpit and said to

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the congregation, "O Moslems, do you know what I am going to say to you to-day?"

"No," replied they.

"And no more do I," said the Khoja, and hastily left the mosque.

The next Friday he asked the same question, but this time the congregation answered, "Yes."

"If you know, then I needn't tell you," said the Khoja, and again made off.

The next week, when the Khoja asked his usual question, the congregation, thinking to display great cunning, said, "Some of us do, but some of us don't."

"Then let those who know tell those who don't," said the Khoja, and once more the congregation were outwitted.

The following Friday, however, they determined to give the Khoja no chance of escape and therefore decided that they would say nothing at all, not even return his greeting as he entered the mosque.

"Let us see," said they, "what our Khoja will do."

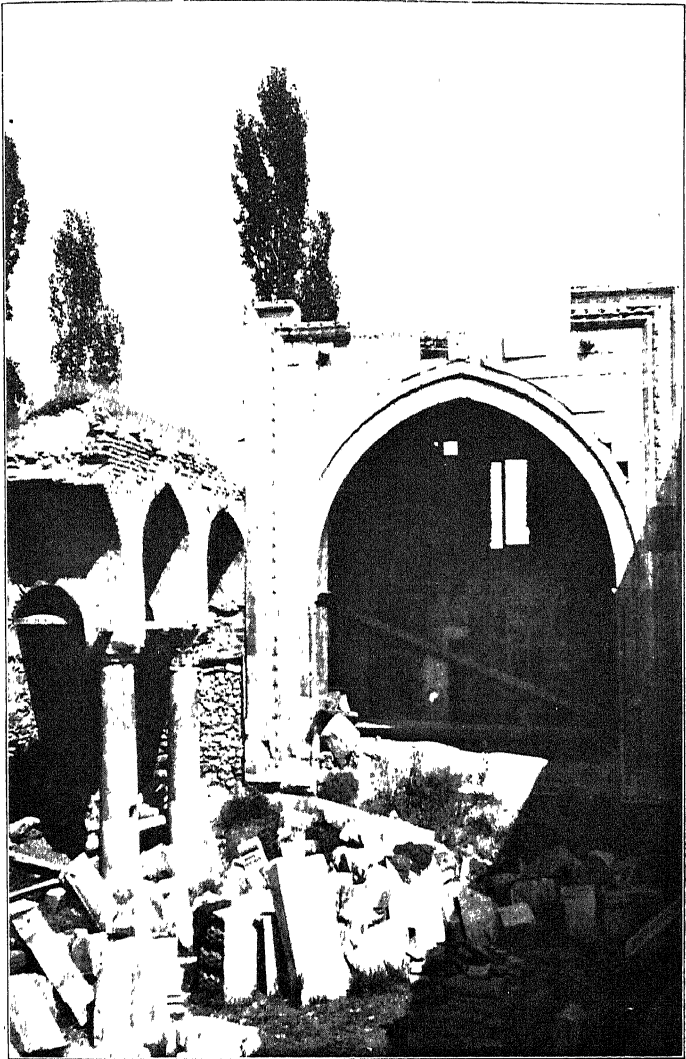
The Khoja duly appeared and greeted the assembly; and, in accordance with the arrangement, no one answered him.

"Dear me!" said the Khoja, as he looked round the building, "I am quite alone; nobody has come to mosque to-day."

And with these words he departed, leaving the congregation resigned to do without his sermons.

The Khoja went home and had just established himself comfortably in his house when he heard some one knocking at the door. He called out to ask who was there, and the man at the door (it was a beggar) called back, "Khoja, come down!"

PLATE XVI



THE TASH MEDRESÉ, AQSHEHIR.

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The Khoja went down and inquired what the man wanted.

Said the beggar, "I want alms."

"Come upstairs with me," replied the Khoja and, so saying, led the beggar to the top of the house. There he turned to him and said, "I have no money to give you."

"A curse upon you, Khoja," cried the beggar, "for making me climb up here if you have nothing to give me."

"And a curse upon you," replied the Khoja, "for having made me come down."

But he was not destined to be left in peace, for his wife aroused him that night from his sleep to ask him to rock the baby.

"It has been crying for the last hour," said she, "and it is your turn now to rock it, as half of it is yours."

"Let my half go on crying," growled the Khoja, as he turned his face to the wall again. "You can go on rocking your half if you want to."

The next day the Khoja arose in the worst of tempers and went to the *hamam*. An acquaintance came up to him and dealt him a blow on the head in jest, but the Khoja, who was in no jesting mood, forthwith led the man before the Qadi and made plaint.

Now the accused was a friend of the Qadi, and made signs to him in Court that he should give judgment in his favour. The Qadi nodded assent and asked the Khoja in curt and abrupt tones what he had to say.

"This evil fellow, O Qadi," cried the Khoja, pointing to his adversary, "has given me a blow on the head without provocation."



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The Qadi reflected for a while, and then delivered judgment.

"For a blow of this nature," he said, "the penalty is one aqché;<sup>1</sup> and I order the defendant to pay you damages to that amount."

The Khoja's opponent looked in his pocket for an aqché but, not having so small a coin about him, went out, as he said, to find one. The Khoja waited and waited and finally became impatient, but the man did not return. Meanwhile the Qadi had resumed his work, and the Khoja observed that he had lowered his head over a letter which he was writing. Deliberately the Khoja went up to him and struck him a sound blow on the head.

"Dog of a Khoja!" roared the Qadi; "what is the meaning of this?"

"What else could I do," answered the Khoja, "since my opponent has not come back with the aqché? You can stay here all day, but I cannot; so you had better take the aqché from him when he returns and keep it for yourself."

And with these words the Khoja stalked gravely out of the Court.

Soon afterwards the Qadi died, and another was appointed in his stead. One day the Khoja, who was temporarily performing the duties of Imâm in a neighbouring village, borrowed a donkey from a Jew and refused to return it; so the Jew haled him before the new Qadi. They rode together into town, the Jew on a mule and the Khoja on the stolen beast. It began to rain and, as the Khoja had no cloak, the

<sup>1</sup> An obsolete coin which was formerly the smallest monetary unit in Turkey. Its value was one-third of a para or  $\frac{1}{30}$  of a piastre.

## THE TURKISH JESTER

Jew, who had two, very obligingly lent him his spare one. Plaint was made and, when the Jew had finished speaking, the Qadi said, "O Khoja, why hast thou robbed this Jew?"

"Robbed this Jew! O Learned among Qadis, O pattern of judges, may thy wisdom ever increase! Hearken not, I beg, to this abominable Jew. I have stolen the fellow's donkey, have I? Why, he will be saying next that the very coat I wear is his!"

"Of course it is mine," cried the Jew.

"O Jew," said the Qadi, "thou art a knave, a liar and a Jew! Get thee gone, and slander no more this just man."

The Khoja returned home in high feather and began to think of himself as somebody, forgetting in his pride to give due glory to Allah; and it fell out that he said to his wife, "To-morrow I sow."

Said his wife, "*in sha Allah*," which means "if God will."<sup>1</sup>

"No," said the Khoja; "willing or unwilling—to-morrow I sow."

And he set out on his stolen donkey with seed corn; but he happened upon a thunderstorm so fierce and violent that he was swept off the back of the beast, his corn was scattered, and the donkey drowned. When he came home, soaked and wretched, and knocked at the door, his wife called out, "Who is there?"

"I am the Khoja, if God will."

Next day the Jew mocked at him, for his mishap had been reported; wherefore the Khoja, desiring

<sup>1</sup> "Say not thou of a thing, 'I will surely do it to-morrow,' without 'If God will.'" Qoran, xvii., 23.

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

to be even with the Jew, bethought him how to set about it. Now the Jew was a dealer in silk, and the Khoja asked him quite politely if he would buy silk from him.

Said the Jew, "Yes."

So the Khoja went into the next street, bought some silk of another merchant, and went to where the drowned donkey lay. Having cut off its head, he swathed it in the silk and bore it to the Jew.

"What a huge bale you have brought!" said he.

"Yes, it is an 'ass's head' of a lot," replied the Khoja, for the Turks use that word to imply a big bulk. "You will buy, will you not?"

The Jew agreed, and for some time they chattered about the price. Finally the Jew weighed the bale, and paid for it by the oke.

When he discovered the fraud, he haled the Khoja for a second time before the Qadi and complained of the deception.

"No deception at all!" said the Khoja. "I sold it to him as an ass's head."

One evening, at sundown, the Khoja, who had eaten nothing all day and was very hungry, passed a neighbour's house as the neighbour and his family were at meat.

Looking in at the door, he called out, "Peace be with you, O greedy ones!"

They answered angrily, "By Allah, we are not greedy!"

"May the Prophet grant," said the Khoja, "that I am the liar, and not you."

Whenever he had anything to give, however, the Khoja was an hospitable soul, and people sought at times to take advantage of his known kindness of

## THE TURKISH JESTER

heart. One day a peasant brought the Khoja a hare. He was warmly welcomed and invited to partake of the hare at dinner. The next week the peasant returned, without a hare, but was again hospitably received. The following week several strangers arrived at the house and asked to be entertained.

"Who are you?" inquired the Khoja.

They explained that they were the neighbours of the man who had brought the hare; and they were given something to eat.

A few days later a large gathering of people appeared at the Khoja's house demanding hospitality. The Khoja asked them who they were and was told that they were the neighbours of the neighbours of the man who had brought the hare.

"Welcome!" said the Khoja and set cups of water before them.

"How now, Khoja," exclaimed the strangers; "what is this water that you have given us?"

"That is not water," replied the cunning Nasr ed-Dîn; "that is the sauce of the sauce of the hare."

Shortly after this episode the Khoja cooked a dish of *tawa* (roast pieces of mutton and onions) for his supper. Just as the *tawa* was ready, two neighbours came in unasked and began to eat with him.

One of them took a large helping of meat from the *tenjéré*<sup>1</sup> and said, "This meat needs salt."

The other also helped himself generously to the mutton and, after tasting it, remarked, "This meat needs pepper."

<sup>1</sup> Saucepan.

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

Hastily the Khoja removed what was left, saying, "This *tenjeré* needs meat."

But he determined to be even with his greedy friends, and on the following day asked one of them for the loan of the largest of his *tenjerés*. The man agreed, and the Khoja took the *tenjeré* home and kept it. After some weeks had elapsed, the owner began to feel a little uneasy about his *tenjeré* and asked the Khoja to return it.

"You cannot have it yet," the Khoja informed him; "for it has just given birth to young and is not yet well enough to be moved."

The man went away in amazement, for he had never heard before that *tenjerés* were wont to have young. Shortly afterwards, however, he was surprised and pleased to receive, with the Khoja's compliments, a tiny *tenjeré* and a message to say that it was the pick of the litter and that the mother was doing well. Two days later his own *tenjeré* was duly returned to him.

The following year the man begged the Khoja to borrow the saucepan again and to superintend the arrival of another family. The Khoja consented, and for some time his friend waited for the *tenjeré* to appear with her new brood, but in vain. Eventually he knocked at the Khoja's door and asked for news of the *tenjeré*.

"Alas," said the Khoja with a doleful air, "your *tenjeré* is dead."

"Dead!" cried the man angrily. "You rascally Khoja, you know perfectly well that *tenjerés* do not die."

"They die as surely as they have young," said the Khoja; "and if you believe the one, why should you not believe the other?"

## THE TURKISH JESTER

Khoja Nasr ed-Dîn once had a lamb, which his friends conspired to obtain by a ruse and eat. They arranged that one by one they should go to the house of the Khoja and tell him that the end of the world was at hand and suggest to him that they should make merry together on their last day and eat the lamb.

The Khoja paid no attention to the first and second who came with this tale but, in the end, after they had all come, he appeared to believe it and agreed to join the party and provide the lamb.

So they went off into the country and sat down near a stream. And as it was a hot day, the Khoja said to his companions, "Do you, my friends, go and bathe in the stream while I make ready the lamb."

They thought the suggestion a good one and, leaving their clothes with the Khoja, went down to the water. No sooner were they out of sight than the Khoja lighted a large fire and threw their clothes on to the flames.

Presently one of the bathers said to the others, "Let us go back now and see if the Khoja has finished roasting the lamb."

They returned to find their clothes in ashes and furiously demanded an explanation of the Khoja.

"But surely," protested he in astonishment, "you were not joking when you told me that the end of the world was coming to-morrow? I wanted some fuel for the fire and naturally used your clothes, for what need will you have of clothes in the next world?"

On the next market day the Khoja proceeded to replace the lamb, and set out for the bazaar with two of the friends who had suggested the feast.

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

Between them they bought a couple of lambs and a ram, for which each paid an equal share. As they were driving their purchases home, the Khoja was asked by one of the others how they should divide them.

"That is easy," said the Khoja. "You two will take one lamb, and the ram and I the other."

This saying became well known in the town and soon afterwards the Khoja's assistance was invoked by three men who were quarrelling about their shares in a sack of walnuts.

"O Khoja, come and help us," said the first, "for we cannot agree upon the division of these walnuts among us three. Make thou the division."

"Yea, divide with absolute justice!" said the second.

"Nay, justice even is not enough," said the third. "Divide as Allah would divide."

The Khoja agreed, and took the walnuts. "Then am I to make division as would Allah?"

"Yea, as would Allah," said all three.

Whereupon he gave one walnut to the third man, and a handful to the second man, and all the rest to the first.

"How now, Khoja, what is this? Dost thou call this an equal division?"

"O fools, when did Allah divide anything equally among men? As would Allah, so have I divided."

With one more tale will I bring these examples of the Khoja's folly and wisdom to a close. A great man once gave a feast, to which, with much condescension, he caused the Khoja to be bidden. Accordingly on the appointed day the Khoja repaired to the great man's house and found himself

## THE TURKISH JESTER

in the midst of a fashionable and richly clad assembly which took no notice of the poor Imâm in his threadbare black gown. No one greeted him or spoke to him and eventually he was shown by a servant to the lowest seat. After a little while the Khoja slipped away unobserved and went into the hall where some of the mighty ones had left their outer garments. Selecting a magnificent gown richly lined with fur, he put it on and returned to the room. Nobody now recognized as the Khoja this resplendent personage whose arrival excited universal attention. The company rose to salute him and the host, who had previously ignored him, approached bowing and inquired after his honourable health.

The Khoja stroked the sleeve of his borrowed garment.

“ Answer, fur ! ” he said.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE OLD SERAGLIO

IN 1853, exactly four hundred years after the capture of Constantinople by Mohammed the Conqueror, Sultan Abdul Mejid Khan, a victim of the bad taste that was spreading from Mid-Victorian England and the France of the Second Empire over all Europe and the Near East, left the Old Seraglio, the home of his forefathers, and established the Imperial residence in his Palace of Dolma Baghché, on the shore of the Bosphorus. For this abandonment of what was venerable and supremely beautiful in favour of what was new, banal and vulgar, the Sultan must not be blamed too severely; he was merely following in the footsteps of the Occidentals of his time, who for a generation or two did their best to make and keep the world hideous.

Abdul Mejid, then, went to Dolma Baghché; Abdul Aziz, his successor, built Chiragan and Beylerbey; Abdul Hamid II., fearful lest the Bosphorus Palaces should prove too tempting a mark for the guns of mutinous ships, retired to Yildiz Kiosk, which has also housed his successors. That treasury of Ottoman art, the Old Seraglio, remains neglected of its masters save on the one day in the year when the Padishah proceeds thither to venerate the relics of the Prophet. The cere-

## THE OLD SERAGLIO

mony over, it relapses into its accustomed seclusion, only disturbed at rare intervals by privileged visitors. Once sheltering a population of thousands, the Seraglio now houses a score or so of servants and a few Palace Secretaries (gentlemen of the *anderun*, of the Interior, they are called in the Persian phraseology affected at Court); occasionally a eunuch flits noiselessly about the empty Haremlik, dim echo of a past that now seems strangely remote.

The Seraglio occupies the easternmost of Constantinople's seven hills, a promontory washed by the Sea of Marmora, the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn; and on its incomparable site once rose the original acropolis of ancient Byzantium. Now it is enclosed by battlemented walls within which are scattered, without method and according to the whim of successive Grand Signors, many buildings of divers sizes, purposes and shapes, masterpieces, most of them, of eastern architecture and eastern decoration. These, collectively, form that mysterious and jealously guarded retreat, that Turkish Kremlin, whence for precisely four centuries the Ottoman world was ruled.

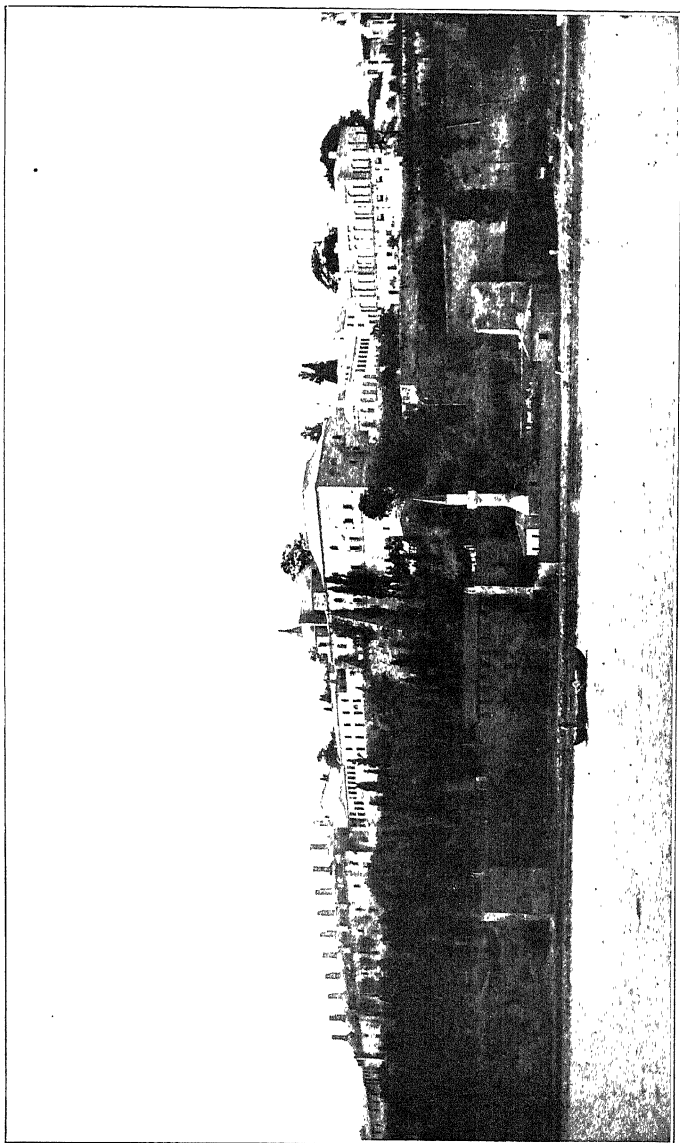
It is not, perhaps, quite accurate to suggest that the Seraglio is nothing but a confused medley of inconsequent and disconnected kiosks. A considerable part consists of courts or quadrangles as regular as those of an Oxford college; it is only as one approaches the *arcana* of the Palace that symmetry begins to make way for a more picturesque variety. The Seraglio in its wider sense begins with the Outer Court, which is entered from the precincts of S. Sophia by the Bab-i-Humayun, "the Illustrious Gate." This court contains the well-

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

preserved Byzantine Church of S. Irene, now the Turkish military Museum and, beyond it, the dilapidated buildings of the Mint. Below the Mint, on the western declivity of the hill, are housed the Imperial collections of antiquities, partly in the Chinili Kiosk ("the tiled Pavilion"), which dates in its present form from the last years of the sixteenth century, partly in modern galleries. In the middle of the court the celebrated plane-tree of the Janissaries, around which that turbulent corps was wont to demonstrate its sentiments of loyalty or, more often, the reverse, still maintains its existence of extreme and enfeebled old age. From the Outer Court, which is open to the public, the Orta Kapu—the Middle Gate—leads into the Seraglio proper, only accessible to those provided with permits from Yildiz Kiosk.

The eastern side of the spacious quadrangle now entered is wholly occupied by the Imperial kitchens, whose row of ten little domes, very conspicuous to ships rounding Seraglio Point, has led irreverent naval officers to speak of the Sultans raising steam for a ten-course dinner. Facing the kitchens is a gallery, now somewhat decayed, under which the Janissaries paraded on ceremonial occasions; in the north-west corner, at the foot of the main tower of the Seraglio, stands the Hall of the Divan. Here in former times the Grand Vizier<sup>1</sup> presided on certain days of the week at a court of justice

<sup>1</sup> The term Grand Vizier, as applied to the Turkish Prime Minister, is exclusively of European usage. Turks employ the expression *sadr azam*, *sadr* meaning "breast," and *azam* "foremost." Under the Angora Republic this picturesque dignitary has degenerated into the commonplace *bash vekil* ("Head Minister").



THE OLD SERAGLIO FROM THE ENTRANCE TO THE BOSPHORUS.



## THE OLD SERAGLIO

open to all suitors. On other days the Hall was used for the meetings of the Divan, the Sultan's Council, conducted no doubt with a due sense of responsibility on the part of the Councillors; for high above their bench, and entered from the Haremlik, is an iron grille or cage in which the Padishah could overhear unseen his Ministers' deliberations.

A gate with a mighty overhanging roof now leads into the more secluded part of the Seraglio. Though bearing the significant name of Bab-i-Saadet, the Gate of Felicity, it does not open immediately into the women's apartments. It gives access, however, to the group of buildings where the Sultans lived their official lives, and it was guarded by the corps of white eunuchs. The court to which it is the entrance is less regular than the two through which we have passed; we approach the portion of the Seraglio where the individual fancy of the monarch rather than a regard for symmetry has dictated the style and the emplacement of its component parts. Immediately before us as we pass through the Gate is the throne-room, a detached building half filled by an immense square divan surmounted by a canopy. In a corner of this formidable affair, which resembles an overgrown four-poster bed, the Grand Signors reclined when receiving the Ambassadors of foreign Powers. It was rather a humiliating performance for the Ambassadors. Before being admitted to the Presence they proceeded to the Hall of the Divan and, under the supervision of the Grand Vizier, were fed and decked with fur-lined robes. Thus prepared, they were led to the throne-room where, standing at a

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

respectful distance and firmly held under each arm by a Palace attendant, lest they should seek to harm the august potentate, they read their letters of credence, to which the Sultan replied with an inclination of the head or, if His Majesty was in an expansive mood, with the single word *peki*, "all right." Then, still clad in their furs, they rejoined their suite and were conducted back to their Embassies in solemn procession, meeting, indeed, with more respectful treatment outside the Palace than inside it. It may here be recalled that until comparatively modern times it was the custom of the Sultans to imprison in the dungeons of the Seven Towers the diplomatic representatives of Powers at war with Turkey; and we read without surprise that during the reign of Mehmed IV. a French Ambassador was called a Jew by the Grand Vizier and beaten with a stool, the dragoman of the Imperial Internuncio frequently bastinadoed and a Russian Envoy actually kicked out of the presence chamber.

The French artist Van Mour, *Peintre ordinaire du Roi en Levant*, who between the end of the seventeenth and the middle of the eighteenth centuries was attached to the households of five successive French Ambassadors to the Porte, has left us a faithful record of these ceremonies,<sup>1</sup> which remained unchanged in form until the reign of Sultan Mahmud II., stern eradicator of Turkish traditions. We see, in the collection of Van Mour's pictures preserved in Amsterdam, the Ambassador, who has dismounted at the Orta Qapu, entering the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. Boppe, *Les Peintres du Bosphore au dix-huitième siècle*, Paris, 1911.

## THE OLD SERAGLIO

second court, preceded by the Palace officials with their staves of office, while under the gallery to the left the Janissaries swarm like bees around the cauldrons of pilav to which they have been treated. We see the Ambassador and his staff being banqueted by the Grand Vizier before the audience, each guest enveloped in his robe of fur. Lastly, at the audience itself, we see the Ambassador inclining before the Sultan, remote and aloof on his enormous throne.

One quaint conceit of the throne-room has still to be mentioned. It is a tap of water and small marble basin let into the wall beside the throne, its purpose that the sound of the running water should prevent eavesdroppers from overhearing conversations within the audience chamber.

In the middle of this third court, which we entered by the Gate of Felicity, stands another detached building, the Sultan's Library. Its single chamber is lined with cases packed with oriental manuscripts; a handsome Saracenic glass lamp hangs from the dome; the walls are adorned with Qoranic texts, written in several cases by the Sultans themselves. It must be remembered that in former days in Turkey, and in the Moslem East in general, calligraphy formed an essential accomplishment of every well educated person. Even the Imperial Princes were not exempted from the study of the art and could probably turn out almost as good an *ayet* as a professional illuminator of texts. Another curiosity of the Library is an old English musical clock, probably the gift of an English King to an eighteenth-century Sultan. In the face of this clock is an ingenious arrangement of ships



## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

travelling up and down billowy waves whenever the clock plays its tunes; and one can imagine how this contrivance must have delighted the toy-loving Orientals of those days.

In a gallery which forms the eastern boundary of the court is housed the Imperial collection of china, well arranged in two long rooms. From the fourteenth century onwards fine specimens of every variety of Chinese porcelain found their way from Peking to the Turkish Court; and the collection, happily preserved through many vicissitudes, thus affords a remarkable synopsis of Chinese ceramic art. During the Dardanelles campaign the collection was removed to Konia for safe custody but has now returned without mishap to its home in the Seraglio. The corresponding gallery on the western side is the Sultan's Treasury. It is now closed and the treasure, if still intact, stored out of sight; but I well remember, on my first visit to Constantinople in 1904, the amazement with which I beheld its splendours almost barbaric. Thrones encrusted with rubies and pearls, the State robes of a score of Sultans stiff with gems and gold, diamond aigrettes, daggers and scimitars jewelled with uncut emeralds of fantastic size, sceptres and maces, an enormous basin of porphyry heaped high with golden ducats—these and much more told of centuries of victorious campaigns in lands of fabled riches.

A small double door of iron, heavily bolted, leads from behind the Treasury into the Haremlik itself. Though much has been written about this mysterious fastness, few strangers have penetrated behind its iron doors, and descriptions have gener-

## THE OLD SERAGLIO

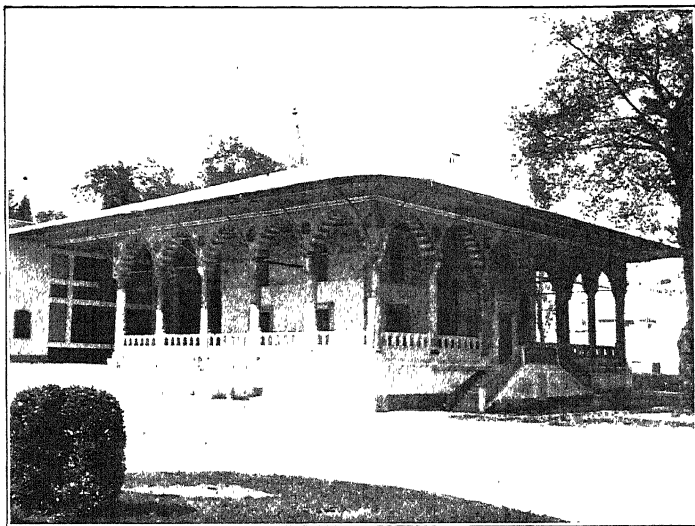
ally been as misleading as they have been fanciful. Until about fourteen years ago, when the last of the old ladies of the Seraglio were transferred to the Bosphorus Palaces, no profane eye had seen the real Haremlik, and the number of persons who since then have been allowed to wander through its now deserted rooms is small. The conventional accounts of the Haremlik speak of stately marble halls, of lofty and luxurious rooms filled with all the riches of the East, of kiosks and fountains of plashing water, of all the appurtenances of the Arabian Nights. The reality is very different from this and much more interesting. Far from being a succession of vast and symmetrical apartments, the Haremlik is a veritable rabbit-warren, a jumble of small courts, corridors, narrow staircases and innumerable tiny rooms. The upper stories, overlooking the Seraglio gardens, are built of wood, and the walls of the rooms, too, are decorated with rococo woodwork panelling. The lower floors are of more solid construction. The stone walls are enormously thick and the rooms are lined with the most delightful of Persian and Kutahia tiles, the designs differing in every room. It is these tiles which are the most typical and pleasing feature of the Haremlik; they give to it an old-world eastern atmosphere far truer than the pseudo-Orientalism suggested by pictures of gauze-clad odalisques eating sweetmeats on cushioned divans. Of furniture there is little left and what remains is for the most part Louis Quinze. A few good specimens of the old Scutari velvets and Brusa brocades have been preserved and cover sofas evidently made in France. The smallness of

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

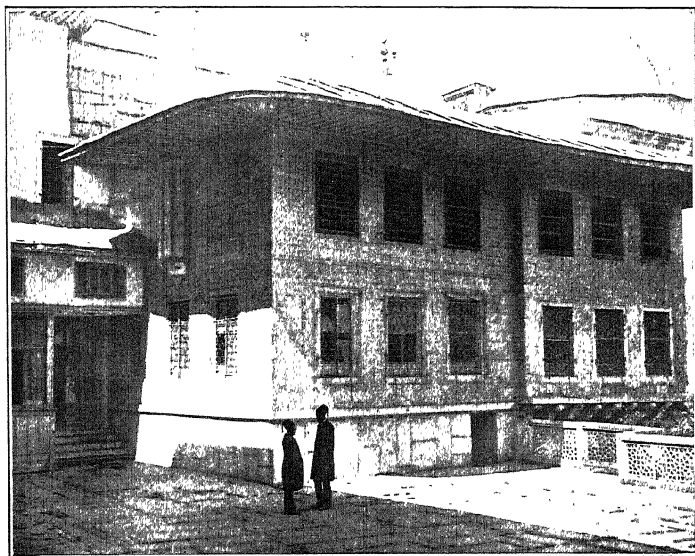
the rooms is a constant source of surprise. Even the Sultans' famous Turkish bath, where Selim the Sot slipped and broke his skull when overfull of Cyprus wine, is no larger than the baths to be found in many a Turkish private house. The only really spacious room is the audience chamber of the Haremlik, where at Bairam and on other great festivals the Sultans received the ladies of the Palace. At one end of the hall is a throne for the Sultan, and above the throne a musicians' gallery. The room is surmounted by a lofty dome and the walls are beautifully tiled. Close by are the schoolrooms of the little Princes and Princesses, also tiled but otherwise now bare of furniture and decoration.

Here, too, is a semi-detached, two-storied building outwardly of great beauty but of sinister memories. It has a widely overhanging roof and its windows are heavily barred. The outside of this building is faced with mellow Kutahia tiles from the ground to the overhanging roof, and externally it is perhaps the loveliest, as it is probably the least known part of the Haremlik. For this delight to the eye bears a forbidding name, the *Qafés*, which means "the cage," and even now the interior is inaccessible. Here, in this gilded cage, the heirs-apparent to the throne of Turkey were immured with the Palace girls and pages set apart for their service, in all other respects rigidly secluded from contact with the world until released by the Sultan's death. They then emerged, blinking, as it were, at the daylight and utterly ignorant of affairs, and from the seclusion of a narrow prison were abruptly transferred to the supreme power

PLATE XVIII



THE THRONE-ROOM



THE OAFÉS.



## THE OLD SERAGLIO

over a vast Empire. This vicious system persisted even to the present century. From his birth in 1844 to the year 1909, when he succeeded his brother Abdul Hamid, the late Sultan Reshad had lived in the strict confinement of his palace, to all intents and purposes a prisoner till at the age of sixty-four he ascended the throne of Osman.

Vying in beauty and interest with the *Qafés* is the portion of the Haremlik which was formerly the official residence of the Chief of the Black Eunuchs. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Sultan Mahmud II. in the course of his reforms swept away what was left of mediæval Turkey, the Qizlar Aghasi (Master of the Girls) was one of the highest dignitaries of the Empire. He ranked next, in fact, to the Grand Vizier, was a Pasha of three tails and as his appanage administered the Imperial mosques and the Holy Cities Mecca and Medina. His official dress, before Mahmud replaced turbans and flowing robes with fez and Stambuli frock-coat, was a white gown trimmed with sable and a white cylindrical head-dress more than two feet high. His former quarters comprise a wing of the Haremlik near the Seraglio tower, consisting of four smallish rooms, two on the ground floor and two up a short flight of steps. Here, again, tiles are the predominant feature, covering the walls and floors of rooms and passages; in the dining-room not only the walls but also the ceiling are a harmony of olive green and turquoise blue, masterpieces of the craftsmen of Kutahia and Nicæa.

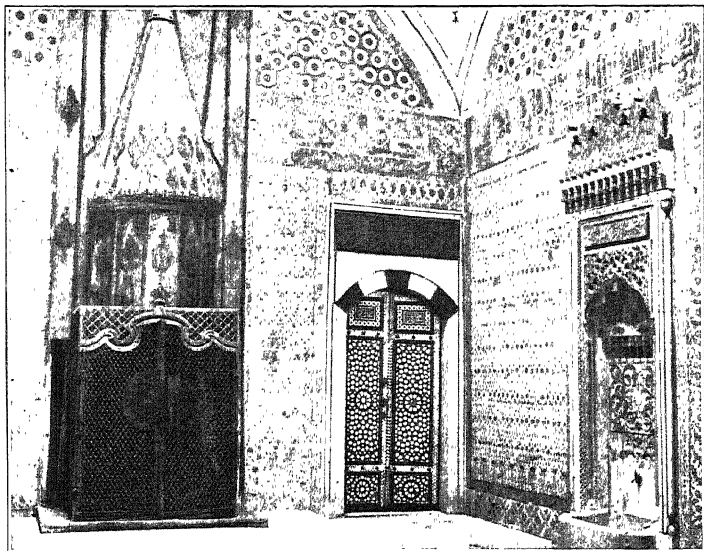
We will now leave the Haremlik for the northernmost part of the Palace, for that lofty plateau,

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

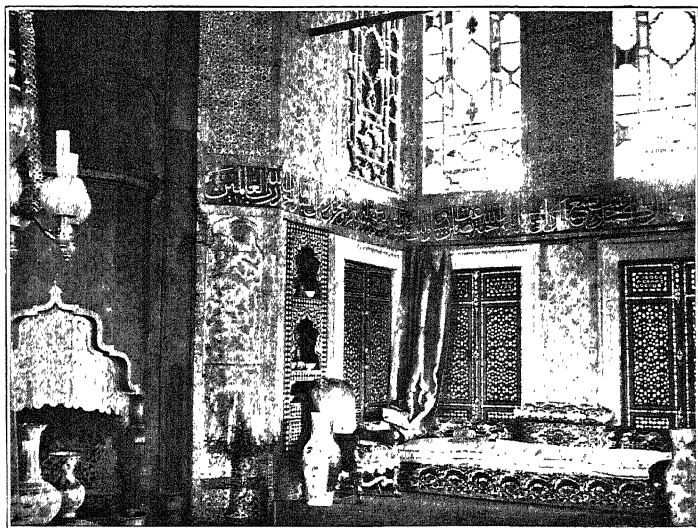
dotted with sumptuous kiosks, which overlooks Seraglio Point. Here is the Khirqa-i-Sherif Odasi, a mosque-like pavilion faced with slabs of porphyry, built to contain the relics of the Prophet, whose possession constituted one of the titles to the Khalifate of the Sultans of Turkey. A terrace of gleaming marble, the setting for one of those delightful formal eastern ponds, connects the Khirqa-i-Sherif Odasi with the Baghdad Kiosk, which commemorates the capture of Baghdad by Sultan Murad IV. in 1638. It is probably no exaggeration to say that the Baghdad Kiosk represents the high-water mark of later Ottoman art. In Aqshehir, in Sivas and, above all, in Konia are the architectural *chefs-d'œuvre* of the Seljuq Turks, in Brusa those of the earlier Ottomans. This delicate little masterpiece on the heights of Stambul seems to have represented the final effort of the Turkish artist before the decadence set in and infected East and West alike. The interior, with its perfect proportions and its exquisite decoration, is a harmonious blend of tiles, rare fabrics and woodwork inlaid with ivory and tortoise-shell. Lovely without and within, the Baghdad Kiosk is a fragment of that gorgeous East which is more often spoken of than seen.

Two pavilions below the Baghdad Kiosk afford interesting examples of a Turkish interior of the eighteenth century. The first is the wooden kiosk of the brutal and rapacious Grand Vizier Kara Mustafa Pasha,<sup>1</sup> a relative by marriage of the

<sup>1</sup> For an entertaining account of this ruffianly Minister, cf. G. F. Abbott, *Under the Turk in Constantinople*, London, 1920.



HAREMLIK : SCHOOLROOM OF THE PRINCES.



BAGHDAD KIOSK : INTERIOR.





## THE OLD SERAGLIO

Kiöprülüs who for fifty years were to all intents and purposes a dynasty of hereditary Grand Viziers. The other is the little house that served as official residence for the Sultan's Chief Physician. Here are preserved, as they were when last in use, the furniture and stock in trade of this important functionary. In one corner is spread his divan, surmounted by a fine old Persian rug; in another lie his chibugs, of enormous length; in a cupboard are his medicine bottles and the seals with which they were closed to guard against the risk of poison. In a large case is the apparatus for the confection of the *majun*, a sweetmeat which it was the Chief Physician's privilege to present to the Sultan and his Court at the festival of Nevruz in return for substantial gifts of money. Owing to the almost universal use of wood as building material and to the frequency of fires and earthquakes, few other specimens of old Turkish domestic architecture survive in Constantinople and its neighbourhood. Practically the only one of importance is the now decaying Kiosk of Husein Pasha near Anatoli Hissar, on the Asiatic shore of the Bosphorus, and when that, too, disappears, the Seraglio will remain the sole repository in the capital of a charming and vanished tradition.

One last vestige of the old Palace ceremonial survives in connexion with the serving of coffee, which is offered in the Mejidié Kiosk to those who visit the Seraglio. The coffee-pot, which is of enamelled silver gilt, is carried by a Palace servant in a sort of censer of the same material. Another servant bears a tray with the cups and their holders (*zarfs*), the cups being of delicate egg-shell china

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

and the *zarfs* of gold, encrusted with rose diamonds. The tray is covered with a square of puce silk, gold embroidered, which, when the coffee is being poured out, is laid by a third servant on the tray-bearer's left shoulder. It is an interesting little ceremony in its way albeit a pale shadow of what the Scraglio has known in its days of glory. Gone are the picturesque functionaries of the most lavish Court in history, gone the thousands of Palace guards and pages, of Bostanjis and Paltajis and Chaushes and Solaqs and heaven knows what beside. No more do the Chief Turban-winder and the Aigrette-keeper adorn the Court, the Chief Nightingale-keeper and the Keeper of the Parrots attend to the welfare of their charges. The traditions of the pomp of centuries are in the hands of three servants in black frock-coats.

## CHAPTER VIII

### MOUNT ATHOS IN PEACE AND WAR

MIDWAY between Thessalian Olympus and the Macedonian peak of Pinar Dagħ, immediately to the east of Salonika, lies the broad peninsula of Chalcidice, a well watered, well wooded district terminating in three long and narrow promontories. The westernmost of Chalcidice's tapering fingers bears the name of Cassandra, the unheeded prophetess of Troy; that in the middle is variously known as Sithonia and Longos; while the easternmost takes its official name from its culminating peak, the mysterious Mount of Athos. Its official name, because to the Orthodox, be they Greeks, Russians, Bulgars or Serbs, it is always the Holy Mountain, and even its Turkish name, Ainérúz, is a gallant if pathetic attempt to reproduce the sound of *"Άγιον Όρος"*.

From the night when bonfires were lighted on its heights to tell Mycenæ of the fall of Troy, Mount Athos has played a part out of the common, a part that has stimulated the imagination of the Levant and contributed not a little to the picturesqueness of the world. Traces are still visible of the canal which Xerxes cut across the neck of the promontory; mariners of the Middle Ages hardily asserted that the shadow of its peak touched distant Lemnos, fifty miles to the south-east. And in

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

these latter days, since "that truculent specimen of the Church militant, the Vladika of Montenegro," has ceased to rule over the Black Mountain, Mount Athos is, with the exception of the Vatican, the only theocracy in Europe, the only State where the Churchman is supreme and the layman utterly disfranchised. Farther, Mount Athos illustrates to perfection the unerring skill of eastern monks in choosing their nests well. No other region in the Near East is greener, more fertile, more abundant in brooks and springs; in none does nature more happily co-operate with art. True, Thasos, its neighbour, is an isle well wooded; Skopelos, Skiathos, Chilandion and the rest of that delightful cluster, the Northern Sporades, are pleasantly redolent of pine and thyme and cistus. But the majority of Ægean islands—and especially Lemnos, where these lines were written—are of an austere, treeless monotony, to which the luxuriant beauty of Athos is a delicious and welcome foil.

It was in the winter of 1907-1908 that the present writer and his companion, H. Pirie-Gordon, made their first pilgrimage to the Holy Mountain, in circumstances which could not well have differed more from those surrounding their visit in the summer of 1915. It was a winter exceptionally severe throughout the Balkans: snow lay all over the peninsula, weighing down the branches of the pine trees and almost covering the *kellia* (cells of hermits), which lurk everywhere among them. Indeed, for two days after our arrival from Kavalla we were snow-bound at the little harbour of Daphne, the only port of the peninsula, and unable to proceed to the capital—Karyæs—to present

## MOUNT ATHOS IN PEACE AND WAR

ourselves, as in duty bound, to the Athonite House of Commons. For in times of peace every visitor to Mount Athos must produce his pass from the Patriarch of Constantinople or from the official representatives of Mount Athos at Salonika before he is allowed to set foot in the territory of the monks. This pass he delivers to the *Hagia Kænotes*, the Holy Parliament of Athos, sitting at Karyæs, and he receives in exchange a circular letter to the heads of the twenty monasteries of the peninsula, requiring them to receive and entertain him. Fortunately the Qaimaqam of Mount Athos, the representative of His Majesty Abdul Hamid II., suzerain of the monastic republic, welcomed us with gladness born of an utter surfeit of monks and hospitably lodged us in his *qonaq*, the only decent habitation in Daphne. Papayanni Bey was an Albanian and a Christian but showed, despite his Christianity, a regrettable lack of affection for his holy charges. Regrettable, but not altogether incomprehensible. For years he had associated with none but black-robed *kalogeroi*, had heard no livelier music than their nasal chants; moreover, it annoyed him, the deputy of the Grand Signor, to have to submit to the law banning everything female from Athos. He admitted that in principle such a law was all very well for monks—was, in fact, a most salutary precaution; but he felt that it was humiliating for the Governor to be bound by a regulation intended solely for the welfare of the governed. Also, he thought, it was erring on the side of over-caution to extend the prohibition to useful beasts such as ewes and hens. It was not clear to him, how the morals of the monks were

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

thereby benefited; on the other hand, it meant that his milk was perforce condensed and that his eggs were imported from Salonika. The Qaimaqam of Robert Curzon's day, as we may read in *Visits to Monasteries in the Levant*, defied the rule by keeping a cat, which posed as a tom until the day when it indiscreetly appeared with kittens. Poor Papayanni, lacking his predecessor's moral courage, reluctantly conformed and was permitted, in return, to pay a brief monthly visit to his family in Constantinople. His household there, he told us, consisted of his wife, two daughters and an English governess, the latter a most unreasonable woman in the Qaimaqam's opinion. She insisted, it appeared, upon having beefsteak twice a week and upon touching her salary at the end of every month. As the unhappy Qaimaqam's salary was generally eight months in arrear and sometimes not paid at all, his dislike of the lady's preference for spot cash can be readily understood. At all events it received the sympathy of our only fellow-guest, an *accoucheur* from Salonika suffering from a nervous breakdown, who was spending a holiday in Mount Athos because it was the only place within reach—and, indeed, in the world—where he could be sure of a complete rest from work.

Eventually we reached Karyæs and presented our credentials to what is undoubtedly the strangest Parliament in Europe. In order that the functions of this Assembly may be properly understood, it will be well, perhaps, at this point to sketch briefly the internal constitution of Mount Athos, a constitution which, despite great dangers, has hitherto weathered unimpaired the Near Eastern upheavals

## MOUNT ATHOS IN PEACE AND WAR

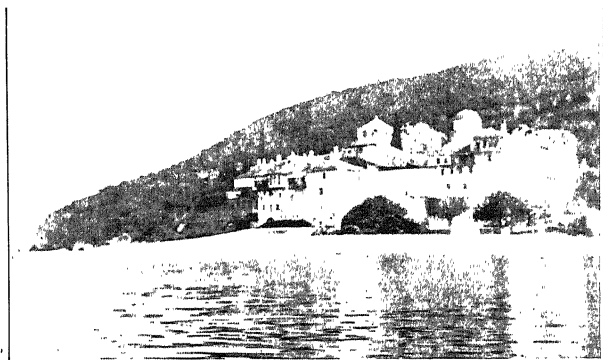
of recent years. The territory of the peninsula belongs exclusively to twenty monasteries of different sizes and unequal wealth, but of equal weight as units of the monastic republic. The number of twenty is invariable despite attempts, of which more anon, to increase it; *sketæ* and *kellia* there are in abundance, but all affiliated of necessity to a parent monastery, apart from which they can have no independent political existence. Nobody not a member or servant of the monasteries and their dependencies may reside permanently in Athos; and the population of the peninsula thus consists exclusively of monks, lay brethren, the *sirdars* (monastic gendarmerie) and a few civil officials, Turkish at the time of our first visit, Greek at the time of our second.

Each monastery, irrespective of its size, sends to the Parliament of Karyæs as its deputy one monk, elected for one year; and the body of twenty thus constituted regulates matters of common concern, subject to revision by an inner or executive Council of four. The *Hagia Kænotes* represents the monasteries in their dealings with the suzerain Power, is the guardian of the institutions of the Mountain as set forth in the Chrysobulls of Byzantine Emperors and the *Typika* of successive Patriarchs of Constantinople; on the other hand, its powers of interference in the internal affairs of the monastery are limited and clearly defined. There is only one order of monks in the Orthodox Church, that of S. Basil; but, as regards internal economy and administration, monasteries are of two kinds, cœnobitic and idiorrhythmic. In cœnobitic monasteries, which are ruled by abbots chosen for life,

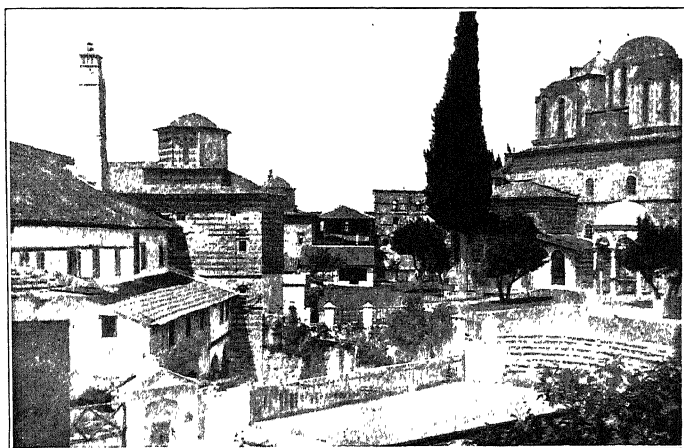


## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

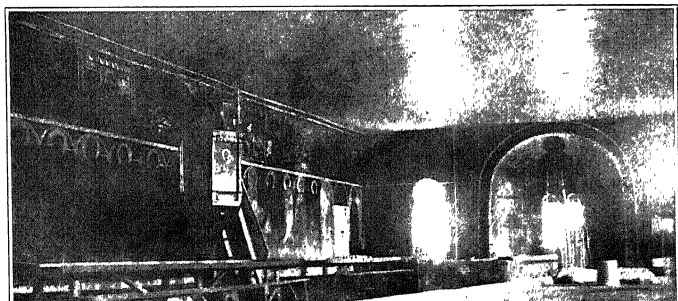
the monks own no property, take their meals in common and generally conform to the earlier and stricter ideals of Christian monasticism. The later and laxer principles of idiorrhythmic rule, on the other hand, permit monks to live in their own suites of rooms, own private property and have a share in the revenues and profits of their monastery. The idiorrhythmic monastery is, in fact, a company owned by a limited number of shareholders, the monks, and administered by a board of directors, the *ἐπίτροποι*, whom the shareholders elect for a certain term of years. Not all, however, of the monks of Mount Athos, or even a majority, dwell in the twenty monasteries. The peninsula, deeply interesting as the principal repository of Early Christian and Byzantine art in all its manifestations, is equally so as illustrating synoptically even now the successive stages through which eastern monasticism has passed. The first stage is the *kellion* of the solitary hermit, usually perched on some almost inaccessible cliff as far as possible from the habitations of other men. Next follows the *skete*, that is to say, a group of *kellia* that has grown up around the retreat of some eremite of more than usual sanctity and reputation. These were the only forms of monasticism known to the peninsula during the early centuries of Christianity, and it was not until the end of the tenth century that S. Athanasius, called the Athonite, became the founder of Mount Athos as an organized community by uniting a number of *sketæ* into its first monastery, that of "the Most Great and Most Holy Lavra" on the south-eastern slope of the Holy Mountain. His example soon found imitators, even, it is inter-



XENOPHON FROM THE SEA.



XENOPHON.





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esting to observe, in the Latin Church : before the close of the tenth century the monastery of Omorphono on the eastern side of the peninsula had been founded in imitation of his by seven Benedictines from Amalfi. Of the brief history of the only Latin monastery in Mount Athos (it had disappeared before the beginning of the thirteenth century) we know little beyond the curious fact that its monks supplied S. Athanasius with caviare ;<sup>1</sup> but simultaneously with the Amalfitans there arrived from the Caucasus two distinguished nobles of Georgia, father and son, who founded in its vicinity the monastery of the Iberians or Georgians. In due course other monasteries appeared, principally through the piety of Byzantine Emperors and of divers Balkan Tsars and Voivodes, until twenty in all had come into existence ; but even so the primitive *kellia* and *sketa* not only continued side by side with their historical descendants, but multiplied. I know of no more striking spectacle in this peninsula so replete with marvels than the locality at its southern end known as Kerasia. Kerasia is the name given to one of the spurs of Mount Athos, a spur which rises abruptly from the sea to a height of some fifteen hundred feet. Of the pink rock of the mountain but little can here be seen, for in every indentation and cranny of its almost perpendicular surface is perched, like an eagle's nest suspended in mid-air, some troglodyte's vertiginous eyrie. Not the pillar-monasteries of Metéora, accessible only by basket or perilous rope-ladder, nor the cells cut in the face of Quar-

<sup>1</sup> Caviare is a popular dish among eastern ecclesiastics as it may be eaten during fasts when even fish is forbidden.

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

tana, the Mount of Temptation behind Jericho, can compare with these dizzy hermitages. With no apparent exits to the outer world, those on the higher level are the merest cave-dwellings, protected by rudimentary wooden balconies and occasionally flanked by a narrow ledge, on which a single row of cabbages pursues its precarious growth. Lower down, where the slope is less precipitous, the hermits are less like flies on a window-pane; by degrees their residences begin to assume concrete shape as they descend toward the sea. By the time the shore is reached they have degenerated into charming little whitewashed villas with terraced kitchen-gardens and pergolas of vine, very different from the fantastic cells a thousand feet overhead. And between the inmates of the two a corresponding gulf is fixed. Those aloft are the eremites of primitive Oriental Christianity, true disciples of the men who sought refuge from the temptations of the devil on the summits of pillars or in the deserts of the Thebaid. Those below live lives of solitude and meditation less from choice than of necessity, have here fixed their dwellings not until such time as death releases them from the world but until they are restored to the world by a favourable turn of fortune's wheel. Consequently their retreats are not without certain of the amenities of life. In fact, they are delightful little establishments, red-roofed and green-shuttered, with pleasant gardens, a magnificent view and ample resources as regards fish and fruit. It was in such a place as this, in the *kellion* of Mylopotamos, that the great Joachim III. spent the twelve years of exile between his second and third reign as Cæcu-

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menical Patriarch and that his more recently abdicated All-Holiness, Meletios IV.,<sup>1</sup> sought refuge in 1923 from the difficulties of his position in Constantinople. Many another is tenanted by ambitious prelates temporarily banished by intrigue from their offices or sees and now intriguing in their turn for the early removal of their supplanters. Thus we see illustrated in Mount Athos not only the extremes of monastic habitations, the lonely cave-dwelling and the prosperous, mercenary idiorrhhythmic monastery, but the extremes among the professors of the monastic life. It is a far cry from the austere follower of S. Simeon Stylites to the deposed prelate scheming for his restoration, but the contrast becomes intelligible if we remember the inducements which eastern monasticism has to offer. At the time of my first visit, I believe that no fewer than three ex-Patriarchs of Constantinople edified Mount Athos by their presence, to say nothing of lesser fry;<sup>2</sup> while to the close of his life Joachim III. kept by him the keys of Mylopotamos, never sure but that some day he might require them again. But we may also see illustrated the opposite extreme. At Iveron there died on the night of our arrival in 1907 Neophytos, sometime Archbishop of Nevrekop in Macedonia, who had resigned his see to end his days as a simple monk in Athos. And on the morrow he was buried. Coped and mitred and as rigid as any mummy in

<sup>1</sup> Since 1926 Patriarch of Alexandria as Meletios II.

<sup>2</sup> In the eighteenth century the ex-Patriarchs of Constantinople had become so numerous that they found it necessary to build for themselves a commodious house in the island of Prinkipo, adorned with spacious gardens—in other words, a residential Club for Cœcumenical Patriarchs *en exil*.

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the folds of his stiff Byzantine vestments, he lay in an open coffin at the porch of the church, receiving the farewells of his companions. Then, after the body had been asperged and censed, six sturdy monks carried the venerable μακαρίτης (the pious Greeks allude to their dead as "blessed") out of the monastery gate for the last time to the little cemetery which lies on a neighbouring knoll rising gently above the sea. Here, still in his open coffin, he was laid to rest while the bells of the churches were tolled and the *semantra* (gongs) beaten, facing that stormy diocese across the Gulf whose conflicts had driven him long ago to seek peace in the monastery of the Georgians. Mount Athos harbours equally *volentes* and *noientes episcopari*.

Let us revert, however, to the constitution of Mount Athos, which, as we have seen, provides for the election to the Assembly of one deputy from each of the units composed of a monastery and its affiliated *kellia* and *sketæ*. This constitution has the effect of giving to all monasteries equal representation and an equal vote, notwithstanding the fact that they differ markedly in wealth and membership. The Greek monastery of S. Paul, for example, a monastery which is recruited principally from the Ionian Islands, has a membership of seventy; while the Russian monastery of S. Panteleemon, with its dependencies, numbers somewhere about five thousand. Here lies the root of the struggle which for the last two generations has disturbed the internal peace of the republic, of the civil war generally conducted beneath the surface but periodically threatening to blaze forth into conflagration. The struggle is between the



A GREEK BISHOP PREPARED FOR BURIAL







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Russian and the Greek, the new and the old, the intruder and the occupant, the progressive and the conservative and, it must in fairness be added, the vigorous and the feeble, the efficient and the effete, for the hegemony of Mount Athos. The Greeks claim and still possess to a considerable extent the leadership of the Orthodox Church as a whole, but their supremacy is being challenged, and challenged successfully. True, of the twenty Athonite monasteries seventeen are theirs while Russians, Bulgars and Serbs have but one each and the Rumanians have only a *skete* without a vote; consequently they command seventeen votes in the Assembly to the three votes of the non-Hellenic elements. Yet the true strength of the protagonists cannot be measured entirely by this standard: in their one monastery the Russians can muster more monks than the Greeks in their seventeen. And hosts of Russian pilgrims, visiting the Holy Mountain at Christmas and at Easter, annually enrich the great Rossikon with recruits and with gifts of money; wealthy Russians frequently make bequests for the foundation of new *sketæ*. They would gladly found new monasteries if they could; but the Patriarchs of Constantinople, anxious to save the Greeks from submersion, have never allowed the canonical number of twenty to be exceeded. The Sultans of Turkey, equally apprehensive of Russian progress, supported the veto of the Patriarchs; and that is why the Sarai, Prophetes Elias and a host of other Russian establishments, while bigger by far than many a monastery, remain voiceless and voteless *sketæ*.

A visit to S. Panteleemon, now generally known

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as Rossikon, brings home to the observer very forcibly, especially if he has just visited some of its ancient Byzantine neighbours, the waxing power of Russia and the waning force of the Greeks. By the irony of fate, this champion of Slav against Hellene was originally a Greek monastery; up to the beginning of the nineteenth century its monks were exclusively Greeks. Then, by degrees, a few Russian monks were admitted, and their number grew imperceptibly until the Greeks realized, when it was too late, that the majority had passed to the intruders. From that moment the Russians multiplied at a prodigious rate while the Greeks dwindled to a negligible handful. At the present day Rossikon, with its vast hostels and many green-domed churches, its *sketæ* bigger than the biggest of Greek monasteries and its general air of a spiritual Kremlin, is the very embodiment of Russian enterprise and propaganda. It was able to send 300 of its monks to take part in the Russo-Japanese war and many more took part in the Great War. Yet its Hellenic origin, remote as it may seem, is not entirely forgotten. Ten Greek monks still lurk unnoticed among the 5000 Muscovites, *comme échantillons du passé*; and in the Chapel of the patron saint, though in none other, the liturgy, for their benefit, is still sung on occasion in Greek.<sup>1</sup>

I confess that, from the æsthetic point of view, there is something of the *nouveau riche* about the Russian establishments of Mount Athos when compared with the venerable monasteries of the

<sup>1</sup> Since the Russian revolution Russian effort in the Holy Mountain has naturally been dormant.

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Greeks. And yet more does the Bulgarian monastery of Zographou, a vast, new, monotonous and ugly pile, appear as a *parvenu* among its hoary and intensely dignified neighbours. That this should be the case is not due to any poverty on the part of the Greek convents. On the contrary, they are for the most part extremely rich. But just as a family that has but recently acquired wealth tends to delight in ostentation, so does Zographou, so do Rossikon and its countless *sketæ*, splash upon the sober tones of the picture the staring greens and brilliant gold of their lavishly bedizened domes. Thus, at Karyæs the harmony of mediæval brick and moss-grown tile, which in few places exists in the same perfection, is rudely disturbed by the glaring vulgarity of the Russian *skete* of S. Andrew, which dominates it from above; the architectural note of the Russian and the Bulgar throughout the peninsula is as striking as it is discordant. The same contrast appears in the interiors of the two groups of convents. Compare, for example, one of Rossikon's many chapels with that of any of the older monasteries. The former dazzles you with the polished gold and bright enamels of the iconostasis, bedecked with diamonds and all manner of other precious stones, with a profusion of modern Russian *orfèvrerie*, costly but unrestful. The patrons and benefactors of Panteleemon and its dependencies spare no expense in gilding the lily. The floor is covered with shining oil-cloth, from which all traces of dust and dirt are scrupulously removed. There reigns an atmosphere of recent opulence, also of speckless tidiness that seems out of place in the last relic of Byzantium in modern Europe.

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Then pass on to Pantokrator or Stavronikéta, to the Protaton at Karyæs, which is the mother-church of the Republic, or to any other Byzantine shrine in Athos. No glaring brightness or polished oil-cloth there. The light that filters in through the narrow Byzantine slits of windows barely suffices to illumine the aisles and apses, the frescoed walls half-blackened with age and incense smoke. The gilding of the venerable iconostasis of carved wood has long since faded to a sombre brown; equally faded are the ancient icons of which it is the frame. Before one icon of particular sanctity, venerated, perhaps, as the authentic handiwork of S. Luke, there may be a display of especial but always sober magnificence. Of the painting itself no more than the eye of the Panagia, a tiny portion, is exposed to view. The rest is concealed behind a cover of silver gilt, beautifully chased by Byzantine craftsmen. Two massive silver lamps are suspended before it, flanked by ostrich eggs similarly suspended; around it hang the variegated *ex votos* of the faithful. Vaguely discerned in a mist of incense are the mosaics of the dome, whence the figure of the Saviour, of mystic Byzantine austerity, looks down with hand upraised in benediction. The floor is more than uneven, it positively undulates; and the wear of a thousand years has dimmed the lustre of its *opus alexandrinum*, cunningly devised around discs of porphyry and verd antique. In a thousand years, no doubt, Panteleemon will have become as mellow as are Xenophon and Docheiaríou; it is hardly fair to judge the twentieth century by the standards of the tenth. Yet it is difficult not to do so in Mount Athos, where

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the artistic standards of the tenth century still happily prevail. The guest-rooms of Panteleemon, with their clean and comfortable beds, their marble wash-hand stands, their taps for hot and cold water, are certainly more soothing to the visitor than the hard wooden divans of Simópetra or Xeropotámou; but there is no doubt as to which sort of accommodation is more in keeping with the ethos of this ancient hermit-state.

Other contrasts there are in Mount Athos beside the architectural. Orthodox monks as a whole, and not least those of the Holy Mountain, conceal beneath a mediæval exterior a very keen appreciation of the financial benefits to be derived from the patronage of modern methods and inventions. Thus we see motor-launches, telephones, photographic studios, electric light and Decauville railways owned by monasteries founded by Comneni and Palæologi; an illuminated Byzantine Gospel and the latest number of the *Financial Times* may be observed together in strange and piquant juxtaposition. It is to be feared that some of the holy men devote to thoughts of lucre more time than their profession and celibacy would appear to render necessary. They take an avid interest in Stock Exchange operations; they dabble gladly in Kaffirs and De Beers. Withal they are kindly and hospitable folk; and, once the visitor has complied with the formalities necessary to enter the peninsula, he is made free of the Republic and treated as a welcome guest.

No such formalities marked our second visit to the Holy Mountain. The purpose of it need not be stated here; but it was one of His Majesty's

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ships, and not an Odessa tramp, that conveyed us on this occasion. Our welcome, however, was as cordial as before, despite the absence of Patriarchal passports; and, though we missed our friendly Turkish Qaimaqam, the monasteries of our Allies strove to make good the deficiency. Our first point of call was the rarely visited Longos, the peninsula which lies midway between Athos and Cassandra. This charming spot is outside the confines of the Republic but its wooded shore is dotted with *metochia* (monastic farms) belonging to sundry Athonite convents. We only visited one, a Bulgarian *metochi* which faces its parent Zographou across the narrow Gulf of Monte Santo; and, as at that time Bulgaria was still neutral, the monk David Zogravski, who was in charge of the place, was still prepared to be friendly. Next we landed on the islet of Amulyani at the head of the Gulf, and from its attractive little *skete*, the property of the Greek monastery of Vatopedi, scanned the traces of Xerxes's Canal. And then, past monasteries more akin in their fantastic outlines to the Lamasarais of Tibet than to the abbeys of western Europe, we followed the coast-line of Athos south and north until we anchored off the *scala*, the landing-stage, of the Serbian monastery of Chilendar.

Much insight may be gained into the character of eastern monasteries from the collection of portraits which their reception-rooms display. In Rossikon large oil-paintings of Nicholas II. and his three immediate predecessors indicate the national rôle of Panteleemon in the Near East just as photographs of Father John of Kronstadt, in every conceivable pose, remind one of the mysticism which

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has so large a share in the religion of the ordinary Russian. Greek monasteries give expression to their sentiments in oleographs of their Hellenic Majesties and of the Patriarch of Constantinople, surrounded (unless the monastery is in Turkish territory) by lurid pictures of episodes (mostly fanciful) of the Greek War of Independence. In Chilendar or Chileontari, the monastery "of the Thousand Lions," quite another note is struck. Its *selamlık*, a spacious room facing the noble crenellated watch-tower, is lined with representations of the rugged heroes of Balkan battles of long ago. Shaggy Jupans and rude Boyars appear in furred dolman and astrachan cap; engravings of Marko Kraljević, George Brankovich, John Huniades and a host of other warriors of bygone days show that in this spot at least the epic wars of mediæval Slavdom are still a living tradition and an ever present inspiration. And naturally so, since Chilendar is the principal link between the Serbia of Stephen Nemanya and the Serbia of Karageorge, between Kossovo Poljë, "the field of blackbirds," and the foundation of the Tri-une Kingdom. For be it remembered that there has been no continuity in the frontiers of successive Serbian States. The Empire of Stephen Dushan did not coincide with the Kingdom of Stephen Nemanya, while the Yugoslavia of to-day bears little resemblance to either. Thus the monastery of the Thousand Lions has been the one permanent Serb institution amid much that has fluctuated or disappeared; the epitome of Seriban history is to be found not at Belgrade nor at Üsküb or Zagreb but at the Holy Mountain. Not only is the origin



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of Chilendar contemporary with the dawn of Serbian national consciousness; during the subsequent centuries of vicissitude and submersion it was the nursery and focus of national effort and aspirations.

The great Stephen Nemanya and his greater son S. Sava, rightly revered as his country's Patron Saint, established the monastery toward the end of the twelfth century that it might become the retreat of the founder of the first Serbian monarchy when he abdicated the throne in 1195. Surrounded by a dense forest of pines and enclosed within stout battlemented walls, Chilendar imports into the placid atmosphere of Athos a whiff of the wilder air of the Balkans; the very porch gives indication of the vigorous habits of its builders. A triple gate of great strength wards off unwelcome visitors; above it, holes cunningly devised for the passage of boiling oil render still more perilous the advance of the intruder. Within, all is of an indescribable picturesqueness, Slavonic mediævalism at its best. Around you are Romanesque cloistered buildings, their walls inlaid with priceless Rhodian dishes; across the great court stretches the church of many domes, a marvel of thirteenth-century architecture and decoration. But it is in the interior of the church that the significance of this Serbian microcosm is realized to the full. Either by a tomb or a banner or some precious offering, each national dynasty is represented here, has left some tangible record of its share in its country's making. It is here, in the monuments of this glorious specimen of eastern European art, that should be read the tangled story of the Serbs, for here, and not on

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their own soil, is the whole of that story written. At the time of my first visit to the Republic of the monks what most impressed me in Mount Athos was its aloofness from the teeming world around it; I am not sure that Chilendar, as the embodiment of the living soul of Serbia, will not be the most lasting memory of my second.

## CHAPTER IX

### A JERUSALEM MISCELLANY

#### I

At the beginning of the Dardanelles Expedition, as a member of Admiral Wemyss's staff, I found myself serving in H.M.S. *Imogene*, well known in the spacious days before the War as the *stationnaire* of His Majesty's Ambassador to the Sublime Porte. This trim little yacht was now mobilized for a short time into the flag-ship, or rather into a part of the flag-ship, of the Senior Naval Officer, Mudros; and her dainty cabins panelled in white and gold, her downy four-poster beds, were offering comfort as welcome as it had become unaccustomed to the members of the Admiral's staff to whom they were allotted. But oddly out of keeping as were these luxuries with their new surroundings, they had none the less to be preserved against the day (destined never to come) when the *Imogene* would revert to her original use, would again cruise peacefully up and down the Bosphorus and among the Princes' Islands in the Sea of Marmora. So the domestics of the yacht were retained and converted into naval ratings, and as such there now functioned George the Greek, Marko the Montenegrin, Paul the Persian and Tewfik the Turk. Tewfik the Turk was, to the best of my recollection, a Moslem Albanian

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while Paul the Persian was a Nestorian Christian from Urumiah in Persian Azerbaijan. Subject to the above explanation these happy alliterations enshrined the genuine names and nationalities of the four men and were not, as one might be tempted to assume, the ingenious invention of some Embassy wag.

Truly a microcosm, this quartet, of the mixture of creeds and races of the "all-corrupting yet seemingly incorruptible" Constantinople; yet the mixture presented, as I found when I went to Jerusalem as Assistant Governor in 1920, a picture of almost dull homogeneity when compared with the variety of peoples and religions, with the Babel of tongues, that distinguish and complicate the Holy City. Jerusalem is a veritable museum of ethnography and of languages; nowhere else, I am sure, is there to be found within so small a compass so wide a range of speech and belief, such diversity of costume, vestments and ceremonial dress, such abundance of notables and dignitaries of almost every conceivable sub-division of Christianity, Islam and Judaism. In few other places of her size, too, is there such a wealth of public functions; and speakers on these occasions have to be careful (for Jerusalem dignitaries are apt to be touchy folk) to preface their remarks with a catalogue of titles that is little short of formidable. No mere "Ladies and Gentlemen" suffices here; an average gathering has to be apostrophized at least as follows :

Your Excellency (The High Commissioner).

Your Honour (The Chief Justice).

Your Beatitudes (Patriarchs).

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Your Eminences (Heads of Supreme Moslem Council and the two Chief Rabbis).

My Lord Bishop (Anglican Bishop).

Your Paternity (Father Custodian of the Holy Land).

Your Reverences (Other Prelates).

Your Worship (The Mayor).

Ladies and Gentlemen.

From the above it will be inferred that the communities represented in Jerusalem, most of them with interests that tend at times to conflict with those of others, contrive to keep a functionary of the Government pleasantly occupied. No, time does not hang heavy in Jerusalem. Holy she may be, and noble, and blessed—*al-Quds*, *esh-Sherif* and *al-Mubarak* are her Arabic epithets—but restful she is not; peace may be within her gates, but it penetrates with difficulty into her Government offices. Here is a résumé of some typical Jerusalem days, taken at random from my diary :

“*4th November, 1920*: The Abyssinian Abbot called to complain against one of his monks, who had become insubordinate and refused any longer to pernoctate within the monastery. The Abbot, unable to impose his authority, wanted the Government to reinforce it against his contumacious subordinate. Then came the manager of the properties of the Russian Orthodox Palestine Society to appeal for intervention in some difficulties he was having with one of the convents of Russian nuns regarding the sub-letting of an outlying portion of the convent. Then, severally, the Orthodox Patriarch and the Father Custodian of

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the Holy Land (the Superior of the Franciscans in Palestine and Syria) regarding a question that had arisen between their two communities over the column in Gethsemane that marks the site of Judas's kiss of betrayal. Finally, the Grand Mufti, to discuss the question of an appeal for funds to restore the Dome of the Rock.

"The afternoon taken up by a rather difficult meeting of the Street-Naming Commission, which has the ticklish duty of providing the streets of Jerusalem with names in English, Arabic and Hebrew, names that will preserve the three traditions, Christian, Moslem and Jewish, in the three languages without offending anyone's susceptibilities. My colleagues on the Commission are our genial Mayor, Ragheb Bey Nashashibi, a man who really gets things done in a land where performance is none too easy, Père Abel of the Ecole Biblique de S. Etienne, collaborator with his fellow-Dominican, Père Vincent, in the most monumental work on Jerusalem ever likely to be written, Brother Jacob Spafford of the 'American Colony,' who knows every inch of the Holy City, the frail Ben Yehuda, who almost single-handed has revived Hebrew as a spoken language and provides the most striking instance I know of the triumph of mind over matter, and our Civic Adviser, C. R. Ashbee, interesting holder of an interesting post.

"*20th January, 1921*: The fortnightly staff conference of the Jerusalem District, preceded by a long meeting with the Mayor of Jerusalem on the subject of roads. In the afternoon Sir Anton Bertram and I held our first public meeting of the Commission of Inquiry (of which he is the Chair-

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man and I am the other member) into the affairs of the Orthodox Patriarchate, especially into its deplorable financial condition and into the validity or otherwise of the deposition of the Patriarch Damianos by his Synod. Then presided at the half-yearly meeting of the Chamber of Commerce. In the evening was present, at the 'American Colony,' at the wedding of two Swedish members of the Colony, who had been compelled to wait for something like four years to get married as it had not been possible before to procure the presence of a Swedish Consul, without whom no marriage of Swedish subjects living abroad can apparently take place. It was not without a certain appropriateness that the bride bore the name of Rachel.

"*13th April, 1922* (Maundy Thursday): At 8 a.m. attended officially the Orthodox Washing of the Feet outside the Holy Sepulchre, the Patriarch being accompanied on this occasion by the Serbian Bishop of Ochrida and by the Orthodox Metropolitan of Rhodes, the latter just expelled from his see by the Italian Government on the ground of Hellenic propaganda. Then inspected the Police and Gendarmerie patrols in the Old City. At 2 p.m. to the Washing of the Feet of the Jacobites in their monastery on the site of the house of S. Mark, and at 3 p.m. to that of the Armenians. After dinner to the English open-air service at Gethsemane. Slept at the office, this being one of the critical days of 'Nebi Musa' week.

*Sunday, 30th September, 1923*: From 8 to 11 a.m. at the Armenian Cathedral for the Holy Cross Day Service, long but beautiful. In the afternoon, it being the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, visited the



NEBI MUSA PROCESSION LEAVING  
S. STEPHEN'S GATE.

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Rabbi of the Bokharan Jews in his 'Tabernacle,' a sort of tent put together of magnificent old Bokharan embroideries. Dined at Government House to meet the Amir Abdallah of Transjordan, who was accompanied by his new Prime Minister, Khalid Bey Abul Khuda, the son of that astonishing character, Sultan Abdul Hamid's Court Astrologer.<sup>1</sup>

"29th February, 1924: Ronald Storrs and I met Cardinal Bourne on his arrival at the Jaffa Gate. J. and I then motored through Jericho and across the Jordan to lunch with King Husein in his camp at Shuneh in the Jordan valley. In the afternoon, on returning to Jerusalem, I visited, in a sordid little house in the Jewish quarter of the Old City, the 'Zadik' of Gur in Poland, one of those enormously wealthy wonder-working Rabbis of the 'Hassidic' Jews, so well described by the brothers Tharaud in '*Un Royaume de Dieu*.'"

It cannot be denied that rivalries and disagreements have assumed all too large a place in the life of the communities represented in Jerusalem. That this should be the case is deplorable, but it is not altogether surprising. The people of Jerusalem

<sup>1</sup> This man's career is one of the most curious phenomena in the history of modern Turkey, a projection from the Court of ancient Babylonia into that of a twentieth century State. Abul Khuda, a Dervish of the Rufai Order, led for some years the life of a poor itinerant *faqir* until, coming to Constantinople, he attracted the attention of Prince Abdul Hamid, as he was then, by eating a live serpent in his presence. With Abdul Hamid's accession his position as a power behind the throne was established, for he not only interpreted the Sultan's dreams in a manner that gave satisfaction to his Imperial Master but became one of his most trusted advisers on matters political and temporal as well as occult.

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have developed a very special mentality, and their outlook on current events is anything but uniform. In order to illustrate quite briefly this diversity of outlook, I do not think I can do better than to quote *verbatim* from *The Times* a telegraphic despatch, describing the manner in which there passed off some second of November, an important date in the Jerusalem kalendar :

“ November 2nd.”

“ In Jerusalem to-day were simultaneous celebrations by all the communities.

“ The Jews have been keeping the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration by a Zionist dinner yesterday and a demonstration and speeches outside the city this afternoon. The Moslems have been firing cannon throughout the day in celebration of the Prophet's birthday. Their shops are closed as a protest against the Balfour Declaration. The Latin Christians are flying their flag at half-mast for All Souls' Day. There has been no disorder.”

Whether Jerusalem be regarded as indeed a city of living faith or, in the words of a well known modern writer, as merely the swarming of sects about the corpse of religion, each member of a particular community regards it as his duty, perhaps not unnaturally, to bear witness for that community with all his might. Unfortunately, his conception of his rôle is determined by the secular tradition of the place, a tradition of incessant struggle on the part of each sect or religious body to maintain its footing against its rivals. So the prevailing spirit, especially in the Holy Places, is

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not so much that of conciliation and compromise, of sweet reasonableness and brotherly love as that of a meticulous (and at times tiresome, as it seems to the harassed official) insistence upon the pound of flesh. It was, for example, somewhat disheartening to be confronted on the very day after return from leave in England with one of Jerusalem's typical minor problems. Two minute fragments of the Stone of Unction in the Holy Sepulchre had been accidentally broken off, and two of the three leading communities of the Holy Sepulchre wished to replace these fragments, which were indeed little more than splinters, while the third community, obstructively inclined, invented the most far-fetched objections to doing so. Fortunately, before the dispute had time to gather momentum, the fragments were lost, or they would almost certainly have given rise to an international question, despite the fact that the present Stone of Unction dates only from 1810.

Equally characteristic was a quarrel that arose between two communities, whom I will call X and Y, over a certain Station of the Cross. This Station is a column situated at the entrance to a convent belonging to community X, who in retaliation for an injury, or supposed injury, inflicted upon them by community Y, insisted on placing a Windsor chair beside the column, to be sat on by their qavass. Of course, the chair got in the way of the Y's on the occasion of their periodical processions past the Station, and an enterprising Y took the bold course of removing it. Thereupon the Y's were assailed from the roof of the X convent with beer bottles and other

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missiles and several injuries were sustained. It seemed difficult to find an amicable solution of this episode, for feeling on both sides ran high and it was necessary for several successive weeks to send police to keep the peace on the day of the procession, much to the disgust of the Police authorities, who could ill spare their men to protect a Windsor chair. Ultimately, *tant bien que mal*, an adjustment was found; but the Y monks, when they kneeled at the Station on the occasion of their next procession, could not resist the temptation to let their cloaks overlap on to the lintel of the X convent, just to annoy the X's. Verily, a trailing of the coat in the most literal sense of the words.

On another occasion I experienced yet more forcibly the inherent mediævalism of Jerusalem life. The Patriarch of a certain Eastern Church, whom I had previously known in Constantinople, paid a visit to Jerusalem, where the Church in question has a few hundreds of adherents, presided over by a Bishop. The Patriarch being an old acquaintance, I decided to give a small dinner party in his honour and naturally invited the local Bishop to accompany his Chief. On the morning of the day fixed for the dinner the Patriarch sent me a note, in which he wrote that he was looking forward to the dinner very much but asked that the Bishop might be excused from attending. In explanation of his request he informed me that he had found it necessary that very morning both to depose and to unfrock the Bishop for serious misdemeanours and that, if I insisted on the ex-Bishop appearing, he would have to do so shorn

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not only of his episcopal head-gear but also of his beard. I was surprised at this communication (although one should learn in Jerusalem to be surprised at nothing), having supposed Patriarch and Bishop, who were, moreover, cousins, to be on the best of terms. The dinner took place without the Bishop; but it pleases me to think that my subsequent appeal to the Patriarch in the erring prelate's favour may have had something to do with the preservation of his beard. It was easily Jerusalem's finest beard, which is saying a good deal, and its loss would have been a calamity not only to its owner but to all who had the picturesqueness of the Holy City at heart.

### 2

It is satisfactory to turn from recollections of discord to those of friendliness and co-operation, of which the Bishopric of the Church of England in Jerusalem is a conspicuous centre. Founded, under auspices not altogether happy, in 1841 as a joint Anglo-Prussian institution, with the right of nomination to the see vesting alternately in the Archbishop of Canterbury and the King of Prussia, it maintained for the space of forty years, owing to the Lutheran connexion, a somewhat hybrid existence. The arrangement, due to the ambition of the German Lutherans to secure episcopal orders, was never popular in England and was denounced in 1881, since when the see has been entirely English and Anglican.

S. George's Cathedral and Close, exempt from the turmoils that at times beset other religious

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establishments in Jerusalem, have been among the few places in the Holy City where leaders of communities that are occasionally at variance with one another can, and do, meet on neutral ground. It was at S. George's, in the time, I believe, of Bishop Blyth, that the then Grand Mufti presented the Chief Rabbi to a newly elected Orthodox Patriarch with the words: "Here is the Qoran introducing the Old Testament to the New." An even more striking example of the unifying influence of the Church of England in Palestine is the special service celebrated annually in S. George's Cathedral to commemorate the liberation of Jerusalem by British troops on the 9th December, 1917. On these occasions the Orthodox and Armenian Patriarchs, the Jacobite and Coptic Bishops and the Abyssinian Abbot participate, fully vested and seated in the choir, while the service, portions of which are read or sung in Greek and Arabic, Hebrew and Armenian, is attended by a congregation that includes not only the High Commissioner and his officers but the principal dignitaries of the country, Christian, Moslem and Jewish. For sheer variety and picturesqueness it would be difficult to match this assembly, resplendent with the rich and diverse vestments of the eastern prelates, the full dress uniforms of the officials and the representatives of the Foreign Powers, the old Turkish ceremonial dress and the gown and white turban of the Moslem notables, lay and ecclesiastical, the grey silk turban and the wide fur-encircled bonnet of the two Chief Rabbis. On more ordinary occasions S. George's can show an equal catholicity: I have known its pulpit occupied by a layman (Mr. Hickson, the



GROUP AT SERVICE TO COMMEMORATE THE LIBERATION OF  
JERUSALEM.

(Showing signatures in Amharic, Coptic, Armenian, Greek, Syriac, Arabic.)





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spiritual healer), by a Serbian Bishop and even by an Indian *saddhu*. But it seems to be the especial privilege of S. George throughout the Near East to act as a bond between peoples of different faiths. For Moslems know him as Sheikh Khidr, the name they also bestow upon Elijah; and they thus tend to merge into one identity the Christian Saint and the Hebrew Prophet, both popular characters in their eyes. Once a year an interesting little ceremony takes place in the cave under the Church of the Carmelite Monastery on Mount Carmel, when mothers bring their babies to be "dedicated" to Elijah, who is believed at one time to have inhabited the cave. On the occasion when I witnessed this ceremony I saw not only Roman Catholics but Orthodox and even Mohammedan women holding their infants to the officiating Carmelite Father who, vested in stole, sprinkled Christian and Moslem alike with holy water and cut off a lock of their hair as an offering to Sheikh Khidr.

Already S. George's has the nucleus of an interesting collection of works of art. Its most precious possession is an early mediæval silver processional cross, probably of South German workmanship, which the ex-Emperor William attempted, fortunately without success, to obtain when he descended upon Jerusalem as a pseudo-Crusader in 1898. There is a handsome manuscript copy on vellum of the Gospels in Amharic, given by the present Empress of Abyssinia; while the Princess Menen, the wife of the Abyssinian Regent, Ras Tafari, brought with her, when she visited Jerusalem in 1923, a quantity of pure gold to be made into a

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pectoral cross for the Bishop. She also brought—a kindly, human touch—some bags of the excellent Abyssinian coffee for the use of “the Bishop’s monastery.” And there is a fine benediction cross, of solid gold, presented by Ras Tafari himself in the following year.

But the most remarkable collections of relics and ecclesiastical treasures I have ever seen—more remarkable than those of S. Peter’s, S. Mark’s and even of the monasteries of Mount Athos—are those in the possession of the Orthodox and Armenian Patriarchates of Jerusalem. The Orthodox treasure is housed in some small, remote and obscure chambers situated at the top of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, above the chapels of Calvary, and is in the care of the “Grand Custodian of the Relics,” the *Μέγας Σκευοφύλαξ* and his three assistants. Not even the Patriarch has access to the treasure without their presence and assent; and it is said that somewhere in the Church is a secret hiding-place, known only to the Grand Custodian for the time being, where the most precious of the objects are concealed in times of danger. These include several fairly large fragments of the True Cross, placed within reliquaries of gold encrusted with large brilliants, rubies and emeralds of fabulous value. There is a reliquary with fragments of the bones of each of the twelve Apostles contained in a large piece of crystal shaped like a mitre, which in its turn is set in goldsmith’s work of the twelfth century. Among the many sets of vestments there is a superb collection from Georgia, dating from the thirteenth century onwards, to which the Orthodox Patriarchate succeeded when the Church

of Georgia was compelled, in the seventeenth century, to abandon the last of its holdings in the Holy Sepulchre. There are rows of croziers of double-headed serpents, hissing at one another over orb and cross, many of them heavily jewelled; there are pectoral crosses innumerable; there are illuminated manuscripts; there are literally hundreds of mitres in their original cases (rather suggestive of old-fashioned silk-hat-boxes) of well worn brown morocco. The most precious of these, as beautiful as it is intrinsically valuable, is of solid gold, set with pearls, emeralds and rubies, the gift of Peter the Great to the then Patriarch. For accepting so regal a present from a monarch with whom his own sovereign was not on the best of terms, the luckless Patriarch was imprisoned for three months in the Seven Towers by an indignant and jealous Sultan.

Neither the Orthodox treasure nor the Armenian, which is accommodated in a chapel adjoining that of S. John in the Armenian Cathedral, is normally displayed or open to the public. Under Turkish rule a wise prudence dictated that they should practically never be shown, hardly ever so much as be referred to; and even now it is only on special occasions that those in authority in the land and visitors of particular distinction are invited to see a selection of the objects. The Armenian treasure is, if possible, yet richer than the Orthodox. It contains what is left of the regalia of the mediæval Kings of Cilician or Lesser Armenia, among them a remarkable embroidered banner belonging to King Haytun II. and the sceptre of the Armenian Kings, the latter a solid piece of amber the length

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of an ordinary walking stick; and it has been enriched throughout the centuries by the gifts of pious (and occasionally wealthy) Armenian pilgrims. From an early period Armenians have been assiduous in their pilgrimages to Jerusalem, braving the difficult and often perilous journey westward from their mountain homes at the foot of Ararat or around Lake Van with the same devotion as that shown in analogous circumstances by their western fellow-Christians. In 1919 I had the good fortune to acquire in the then independent Republic of Armenia, now forcibly converted by the Bolsheviks into a vassal-state of the U.S.S.R., a curious seventeenth century charm, written for an Armenian pilgrim of the name of Mardiros as a protection against the dangers likely to beset his path to the Holy City. It is a manuscript roll some three inches wide but nearly three yards long, adorned with pictures crudely illuminated in red and green. It is headed by a miniature of the Archangel Gabriel, below which is a prayer to the angels and archangels "to preserve unto God the pilgrim Mardiros, especially when he is called upon to appear before the Judges, the Kings, Pashas, Barons, Aghas, Police Officers, *Naibs*<sup>1</sup> and the seventy-two and a half nations."<sup>2</sup> The next panel depicts a repulsive Armenian demon named Tepri or Alk, who holds the liver of a woman in his hand. The

<sup>1</sup> Subordinate judges of the Courts of Qoranic Law.

<sup>2</sup> *I.e.*, the nations of the earth. Armenian tradition adds two and a half nations to the list as given in Genesis x., the "half nation" being the gypsies. The number bears a curiously close resemblance to that of the seventy-three Moslem sects foreseen by the *Summa*.

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text is as follows : “ S. Paul, S. Peter and S. Sylvanus went on a journey and saw a man sitting on the sands. His hair was as that of a horse, his eyes were of glass, his teeth of iron, his fangs those of a boar. The Saints said to him : ‘ What art thou, unholy and hideous one, and why sittest thou here ? ’ Said the unholy one : ‘ I am Alk, the demon of wickedness, who sits upon the women in childbirth. We deafen their ears, we tear out their liver and strangle mother and child. Our food is the flesh of the newly-born and the liver of those who have given birth. We steal the babes born before their due time and carry them, deaf and dumb, to our king in the abyss, and he rewards us. I implore you, do not torment me.’ But S. Paul said to him : ‘ Whatsoever I bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and in whatever house my name be, thou hast no power to approach that house and the servant of God, the pilgrim Mardiros.’ ”

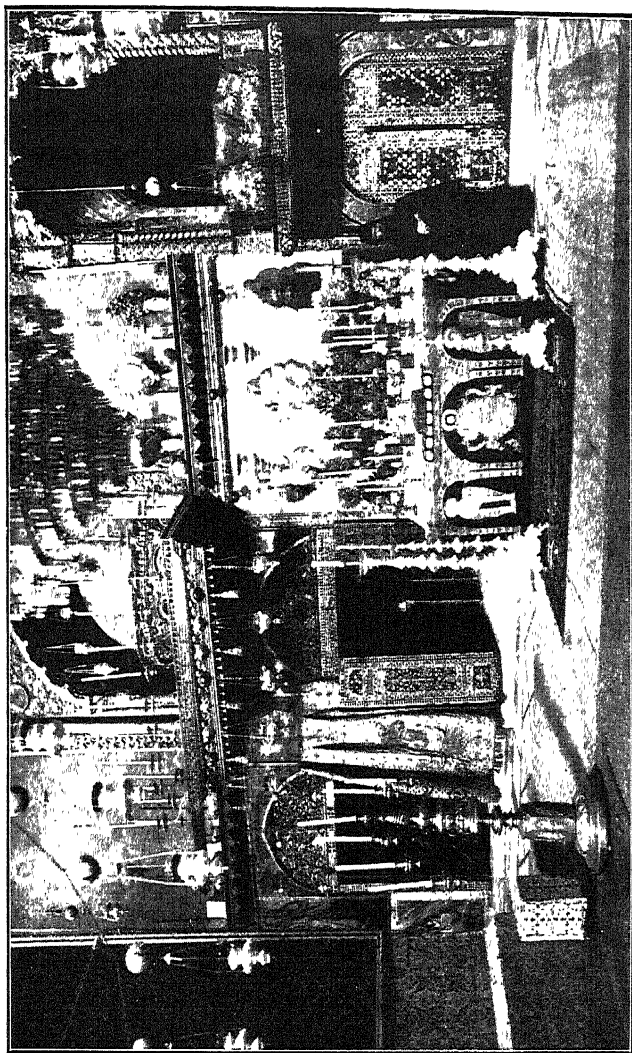
The third panel shows S. Sergius on horseback and contains the following delightful appeal : “ O, S. Sergius the ever-watchful, who hast power over the belly-ache and all other ailments, grant healing to the pains of the servant of God, the pilgrim Mardiros.”

Among other invocations in this quaint mixture of piety and superstition are the following : “ As God the Father was softened in sending His Son, and as the Son softened in saving all mankind, as the fruit sweetened to the eyes of Eve and the words of Eve unto the ears of Adam, as the sugar sweeteneth in the cane and the bee is sweetened by the scent of the flowers, so may the hearts of the

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Barons and the Aghas, the Police Officers and the *Naibs*, Armenians and Moslems and the seventy-two and a half nations be sweetened towards the servant of God, the pilgrim Mardiros." And again: "As Elijah bound the heavens, as Daniel bound the jaws of the lions, as the Holy Virgin bound the mouths of the Jews, as Solomon bound the legions of the devil, as David bound Goliath, as the Almighty bound the might of Satan, so likewise may the words and thoughts and purposes of evil-speaking, evil-thinking and evil-hearted men be bound towards the servant of God, the pilgrim Mardiros."

It is an interesting document, this charm, in the manner in which it reveals the fears, the pre-occupations of the oriental pilgrim to Jerusalem three centuries ago; and it is, above all, thoroughly human. It is, indeed, the human interest of Jerusalem, not less great than the religious, the archæological and the architectural, that makes life in the Holy City so stimulating an experience. You may be—you frequently are—harassed within her walls, but at all events you can never be dull. She contains, for that, representatives of too many interesting peoples. There are not as many as there were; but there still remain beside the Moslems, beside Jews of every country and of every *nuance* of Judaism, beside the native Christians of the land, colonies long established in the Holy City of Armenians, of Jacobites, of Copts, of Abyssinians, of Maronites, of Syrian Catholics, of Chaldæans. The Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem dates from the seventh century, the Jacobite Bishopric from the sixth, the Coptic Bishopric



ARMENIAN CATHEDRAL IN JERUSALEM.  
Altar of S. John and door of Treasury.





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from the thirteenth, the Abyssinian colony from the fifteenth, if not from an earlier period.

The Abyssinians, an occasionally fractious but on the whole simple, likeable, rather naïve little band of monks and nuns, display their ancient African Christianity in ceremonies of an exotic and almost barbaric picturesqueness on the roof of S. Helena's Chapel in the Holy Sepulchre, the most important part of the Holy Places that remain to them. Another of their possessions is a portion of the traditional scene of our Lord's baptism on the right bank of the Jordan. Here, in a thicket of poplars, tamarisks and willows, they have a queer little settlement which consists of huts of wattle and daub—some of them actually perched in the trees—surrounding a rough sylvan chapel of the same materials. To this place the Abyssinian monks come down from Jerusalem at certain seasons of the year, three or four at a time, for meditation and a change of air; but I remember a certain venerable anchorite, reputed to be well over a hundred years old and certainly looking it, who dwelt here permanently, perched, like an aged bird, in one of these strange nests. On sunny afternoons he would be taken out to the little platform of branches which did service as his balcony, and here (for the old man was blind) he would sit tethered by the leg to the trunk of the tree, so that he should not fall off the platform, while another monk would read to him in droning tones from a vellum manuscript of the Psalms of David. On one occasion the Abyssinian Abbot called to see me at the Governorate in Jerusalem on a matter, he said, of some urgency. He was anxious,

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it transpired, to borrow our motor-lorry to take himself and several of his clergy to the Jordan and back on the following day. When I asked him the reason for this somewhat unusual request, he explained that the lessees of a house in Jerusalem belonging to his convent had declined to pay their rent and that, as the next day was a Saint's day propitious for the granting of prayers, he wanted with his companions to make supplication by the banks of the Jordan that his tenants' purse-strings might be loosed.

### 3

I do not think there can be many places in the world where tragedy and comedy, pathos and burlesque are so inevitably and so inextricably mixed as in Jerusalem. Life would be very trying within those sacred walls did one not know that tears would assuredly be followed at no long interval by laughter. Among the most moving spectacles that the Holy City provides is the ceremony known as the "Wailing of the Jews." This sight is to be seen on each recurring Sabbath and is so well known that I will not attempt to describe it here. Suffice it to say of the participants that their tears are genuine, their self-abasement deep. Indifferent to the ribald comments of the curious, unconscious of everything but the grief which weighs so heavily upon them, a national grief which is also a personal one, they kiss with unfeigned emotion the stones of the Wailing Wall which hides their Temple from them and utter, in the admirable dialogue of which the service proper consists, the distressful

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cry of an humbled and contrite people. But walk from the Wailing Wall up the steep incline of David Street to the Square of the Citadel, just within the Jaffa Gate, and as likely as not you will witness a heated encounter between a taxi-driver and a Jewish passenger, as the latter, while lax enough to drive on the Sabbath, endeavours to persuade the former that he cannot pay his fare until the following day, since to make a payment on the Sabbath would be "work" and therefore unlawful. Passing, one Friday afternoon, the place where the main road from Jaffa enters the outskirts of Jerusalem, a colleague of mine was the spectator of an incident as ludicrous as it was characteristic of this amazing city. Dashing up from the direction of Jaffa at breakneck speed he saw a Ford car, containing an obviously moribund cow sitting propped up in the back seat beside an extremely agitated Jew. Just at this point the car broke down, and my friend was able to probe the mystery of its ill-assorted occupants. The cow, he learned, had suddenly sickened, and its owner was straining every nerve to get it to a Kosher slaughter-house before sunset should herald in the Sabbath so that it might be slaughtered before it breathed its last and its meat might not be wasted.

Jewish life in Jerusalem is in its tremendous variety full of surprises for the Gentile observer. Every sort of Jew, western and eastern, agnostic and ultra-orthodox, rubs shoulders there: the American business man; the graduate of Continental universities; the Ashkenazim of the Ghettos of central and eastern Europe, distinguished on the Sabbath day by their gabardines of orange or purple

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velvet and their wide velvet fur-encircled hats; the black-turbaned Sephardim of the Near East, still using the fifteenth century Castilian speech of their forefathers, expelled from Spain by Ferdinand and Isabella; the Bokharan Jew resplendent in the rich colours and stuffs of Central Asia; the gnome-like little Jew of the Yemen, as dark-skinned as his Arab neighbour and a cunning artificer in metals; the bent, shuffling, bespectacled Jew of the "Halukka," spending an unhealthy life in some ill-lighted hovel blinking out his eyesight over the Talmud at the expense of wealthy co-religionists abroad, who are content to practise a vicarious piety. There is even, although it is somewhat outside the strict Jewish fold, a tiny colony of Qaraites, a sect which separated from the main body of Jews in the eighth century A.D. and rejects the Talmud. The Qaraites possess a small semi-underground mediæval synagogue in Jerusalem but their main settlements are among the Tatar towns and villages of the Crimea. It is curious to note that they write both the Greek and Tatar languages in the Hebrew script.

One of the weirdest of the many weird ceremonies I have seen in Jerusalem is the religious dance performed on the occasion of the "Feast of the Law" by the "Hassidic" Jews, followers of a system which originated in the Ghettos of Poland and its neighbour-lands. These people, who may be described as the mystics of Judaism, seem to occupy in their faith a place similar to that occupied by the Dervishes, and especially the Dancing Dervishes, in Islam. That is to say, they seek an outlet from the formalism of their religion in move-

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ment, movement designed to generate emotion and to produce a state of ecstasy that will bring about a temporary oblivion of earthly surroundings. It was almost an uncanny sensation to watch these men, some quite young, some very old, bearded and with side-curls and dressed in festal array, swaying and gyrating to the accompaniment of a strange rhythmical chant, clutching the scroll of the Law in their arms with anxious care (for to drop it would bring dire misfortune) as they whirled around their synagogue with wild, ecstatic stare. And when we left the synagogue and made our way towards the Damascus Gate through the narrow lanes of the Jewish quarter, we found these full of native Palestinian Jews, likewise dancing and clapping their hands but shouting the very same chants and much the same kind of topical Arabic verses as one hears from the Moslem pilgrims at the Nebi Musa procession and from the Christian villagers in the Holy Sepulchre at the ceremony of the Holy Fire. Truly a city of endless surprises!

### 4

Architecturally, the most prominent of the more modern additions to the population of Jerusalem is the Russian community. The active encouragement of the Russian Imperial Government and the Imperial Family had contrived by 1914 to make of the "Moscovieh"—a formidable compound containing consulate, cathedral, several vast hospices for pilgrims, hospital, dispensary, clergy-house and mission—what was virtually a Russian town, a Russian *enclave*, in the middle of the new

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Jerusalem outside the walls. In pre-War days the Russian pilgrims constituted one of the most characteristic elements of Jerusalem life; and it was upon their generous gifts that the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem depended for a large part of its revenues. Now they are to be seen no longer, but there remain enough Russian monks to tend the Church built at Gethsemane by the late Grand Duchess Elizabeth in the Russian style, its bulbous gilded domes a landmark for many a mile; and near the southern extremity of the Mount of Olives, immediately to the east of the Chapel of the Ascension, Russian nuns still inhabit their convent, still delight with their singing the visitors to their church on Sunday afternoons. The singing is, as in all Orthodox churches, unaccompanied, all the parts being taken by women; and it must be strange to those who do not know Russia to hear deep bass notes proceeding from these frail nuns in black choir-dress and black veils as, grouped around a lectern at the crossing of nave and transept, they sing their Vespers. To my mind, there is no church music so lovely as the Russian; and in this sanctuary on the heights of Olivet, whence you look down on the one side upon the Holy City bathed in the glow of the afternoon sun, on the other over the incomparable Jordan valley and the Dead Sea to the Mountains of Moab already in the shadows, it loses nothing of its emotional power as rendered by this sad little group of exiles.

It must be comforting to many to think that the body of the Grand Duchess Elizabeth should now be resting, after having undergone sad vicissitudes,

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in the church which this poor lady was instrumental in founding. A daughter, it will be remembered, of the Princess Alice and a sister of the murdered Empress, she devoted her life to charity and to the alleviation of suffering, and actually took the veil after the assassination of her husband, the Grand Duke Serge, in 1905. None the less, she was brutally done to death in Siberia during the Bolshevik Terror, but her remains were rescued by Admiral Kolchak's forces and with great difficulty conveyed, together with those of a faithful nun and attendant, who was murdered with her mistress, to China. After a long interval it was found possible for the bodies to be brought to Palestine, where they arrived in January, 1921. I have witnessed in Jerusalem many ceremonies, stately and splendid, set in the most impressive surroundings, but I have seen none so poignant as the arrival of those two unadorned wooden coffins, after their pathetic Odyssey, at Jerusalem's plain little railway station. There was neither pomp nor circumstance, there were none of the ceremonial trappings generally associated with the funerals of exalted personages. The coffins, both exactly alike, of two unhappy women were lifted from the train on to the platform, two weeping Russian priests began to sing, very sweetly, the prayers for the dead, and a little cavalcade wound its way sadly and unobtrusively towards the Garden of Gethsemane, to one of the few surviving fragments of Holy Russia.



## CHAPTER X

### THE HOLY SEPULCHRE AND THE HOLY FIRE

It is said, with what truth I have been unable to verify, that in the Census Report of the United States one volume is devoted to the mere enumeration of the religious sects which flourish in "God's own country." In the census which has recently been taken by the British Administration of Palestine we find, relatively, an almost equally respectable variety, twenty-five denominations and forty mother-tongues being recorded for a population of three-quarters of a million. Some such result as this is not surprising in the land which has not only given to the world Judaism and Christianity and has played an appreciable part in the early development of Islam but has attracted for many centuries pilgrims and settlers of every branch of the three faiths. It is, of course, Christianity which makes the principal contribution to this diversity, for every Episcopal Church and several others maintain as it were an ecclesiastical embassy at the religious capital of the Christian world. Jerusalem boasts four Patriarchs—Orthodox, Latin, Armenian and Melkite; and, if it is surpassed in this respect by Antioch, which gives a title to six, not one of the half-a-dozen Patriarchs of Antioch has been near Antioch for centuries whereas three of Jerusalem's four reside permanently in the Holy City. Apart

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from Patriarchs Jerusalem is the see of Anglican, Jacobite and Coptic Bishops, the seat of an Abyssinian Abbot and of Vicars-General innumerable; while in the Orthodox Patriarchate alone no fewer than fifteen titular Archbishops assist the Patriarch in the ceremonies of the Church and enhance by their presence the dignity of his Court.

It is in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, without question the most remarkable of all religious establishments, that the ecclesiastical comprehensiveness of Jerusalem is to be seen in its most concentrated form. The Holy Sepulchre is the gathering-place of every form of Catholicism, western and eastern, of Orthodox and Monophysite, of forgotten heresies and dead languages, a very Babel of Christianity in which God is worshipped not only in Greek and Latin, Arabic and Slavonic, but in Syriac and Armenian, Coptic and ancient Ge'z.<sup>1</sup> In these several tongues are intoned the rites of Rome and Byzantium, of Antioch and Alexandria, by men whose beliefs recall the fierce theological controversies of the early Councils; at its altars officiate priests of every hue, from sable Abyssinians and tawny Copts to Franciscans of the familiar western type. Of its votaries some keep Christmas after the New Year, others once a month; within its walls are represented those who date their era from Diocletian's persecution of the Christians and those who prefer to do so from the Babylonian conquests of Seleucus Nicator. In short, there is celebrated in the Holy Sepulchre almost every known form of Christian liturgy and

<sup>1</sup> The liturgical language of the Abyssinian Church and parent of the modern Amharic.

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ritual, according to every known kalendar; to the spectator this universal cathedral offers a variety of Christian ceremonial visible nowhere else under one roof.

At the present time six<sup>1</sup> communities are established in the Holy Sepulchre, each enjoying whole or part ownership of certain portions of the building. The principal partners are the Orthodox, the Latins and the Armenians, whose shares are considerable; less well endowed are the Copts and Jacobites, while the hapless Abyssinians are relegated to the roof of S. Helena's chapel, of which more anon. In a sense there is even Moslem participation in the fabric, for Saladin made over to a college of dervishes the western precincts of the church, including the palace of the Latin Patriarchs. To this day the palace forms a part of Saladin's foundation of the Khanqa, and the Imâm of the adjacent Khanqa Mosque shares with Orthodox and Franciscans the roof over the Sepulchre itself. In earlier times the Maronites, Nestorians and Georgians had also their part, the latter having once been so prominent in Jerusalem that they ranked fourth in the Holy Sepulchre and owned not only the chapel of the Invention of the Cross but, for a time, the all-important one of Calvary. They lost their separate representation in the seventeenth century because they could no longer afford to pay the tribute exacted by the Turkish Government from all the tenants of the Sepulchre, and many of their splendid mediæval vestments now adorn,

<sup>1</sup> By the courtesy of the Orthodox Church, the Church of England is permitted to hold services in a chapel of the adjacent Convent of Abraham.

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as has been said in the previous chapter, the Treasury of the Orthodox. The Maronites appear to have withdrawn long before the troubles which beset their native Lebanon in the middle of the last century, but the few in Jerusalem participate, together with the other Uniates, in the big Latin functions in the Sepulchre, when their prelates, with those of the Melkite, Chaldæan, Syrian, Armenian and Abyssinian Catholic rites, follow in the wake of the Latin Patriarch. The poor little Nestorians, who once evangelized the west coast of India and half China, whose Bishops ruled in Ceylon and Siberia, Cyprus and Samarkand, have long since lost their chapel in the mother-church of their faith.

It has not always been a very happy family, that of the Holy Sepulchre, and its history for the last eight hundred years or so is melancholy reading. Melancholy, and even sordid, yet not without occasional comic relief. Thus at Easter, 1674, when rivalry between Latins and Orthodox was particularly acute over the ownership of the actual Tomb of the Saviour, there took place in front of the Tomb a *mêlée*, in the course of which two Orthodox monks were killed. The Orthodox sent their Patriarch to the Sultan in Adrianople with a passionate appeal for redress; the Latins maintained with equal heat through the French Ambassador to the Porte that the monks in question had died of old age. I myself have seen, his great beard bristling with holy wrath, the enraged Bishop of an Eastern Church, whose chapel was being encroached upon by the prelate of another denomination, wielding his pastoral staff with devastating

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effect, not so much in order to collect his own sheep as to scatter the goats of his opponent. Perhaps it is not altogether an unwise dispensation that has preserved from Ayyubid into British times the Moslem gate-keepers of the Sepulchre, for not only are the members of this ancient and aristocratic corporation the repositories of age-long tradition and experience in the complicated questions of right and privilege which arise within the Holy Sepulchre; their neutrality as Mohammedans gives them additional authority to mediate in the disputes which still arise within its walls. The two families to whom the keys of the Church are entrusted, the Judeh and the Nusseibeh, claim that their ancestors received this charge from the Khalif Omar in the seventh century. It is more probable, however, that they were appointed by Saladin when he took Jerusalem in 1187, being granted a portion of the fee then levied on every pilgrim. The fees imposed by the Moslem rulers of Jerusalem were officially abolished under Sultan Abdul Mejid, uncle of the present Khalif of the same name, but in earlier days they were a very sore subject with the pilgrims. Indeed, one of the chroniclers goes so far as to attribute to an incident provoked by these exactions the exodus, if not the genesis, of the Crusades. It appears that Count Raymond of Toulouse, afterwards one of the leaders of the First Crusade, was asked when on the pilgrimage to Jerusalem for more than the usual amount by the Moslem gate-keeper of the Holy Sepulchre. Raymond refused and, in the scuffle which ensued, his right eye was knocked out. "He kept the eye," says the chronicler,

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“wrapped it in the corner of his garment, brought it to Rome, showed it everywhere, and thus aroused such indignation that great Counts rose up, collected large armies, and marched on Constantinople.” The tale, albeit fanciful, indicates the extent to which the theme preoccupied men’s minds in those days; and the desire of Western Christendom to obtain possession of the Holy City was maintained and stimulated by the complaints of the pilgrims who, year by year, were outlining the routes of future Crusading armies. The treatment accorded by the Moslems to the Christian pilgrims in pre-Crusading days varied with the sentiments of individual rulers. The earlier Khalifs, both Om-mayyad and Abbasid, were conspicuously tolerant. Harun er-Rashid, who is known to have maintained friendly relations with Charlemagne, is actually related to have presented to him the keys of the Holy Sepulchre (also an elephant, which surprised the Emperor’s subjects very much); and Charles founded in Jerusalem a hospice for the accommodation of pilgrims, the first of a long succession of similar establishments with which the Holy City has been endowed. The period of free access on the part of Christians to their holy places came to an abrupt end in the reign of the Fatimite Khalif Hakim. This demented tyrant, who was to become the founder and deity of the religion of the Druses, is stated by some of the chroniclers to have been inflamed against the Christians by tales of frauds practised at the ceremony of the Holy Fire. Whatever the reason, in 1009 he caused the Holy Sepulchre to be razed to the ground, and for thirty years its site lay desolate and waste. The work of

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Charlemagne, too, was swept away in the general destruction of Christian property, and it was not until after Hakim's death that church and hospice were rebuilt. The latter task was undertaken by certain charitable merchants of Amalfi, whose hospice deserves to be remembered, for upon it there arose an institution which labours for and in the Holy City to-day as it did eight centuries ago, the Order of S. John of Jerusalem.

Originally a group of small separate chapels surmounting the holy sites, and combined into one comprehensive cathedral by the Crusaders, the Holy Sepulchre in its present form has maintained its mediæval design and dimensions, although half of the mediæval fabric was destroyed by fire in 1808. The two main parts of the building, each surmounted by a conspicuous dome, are the circular Rotunda or Church of the Anastasis, which covers the Tomb itself, and the rectangular Chorus Dominorum of the Crusaders, now the cathedral of the Orthodox. The Rotunda is the common property of all the communities within the Holy Sepulchre, and is therefore the most difficult to administer. Complicated regulations prescribe the times at which the several Churches shall proceed to their services and the manner in which they shall marshal their processions; but, when the big festivals of the western and eastern rites coincide, even this elaborate code does not always avert moments of tension. When towards 1848 the wooden dome of the Rotunda, rebuilt after the fire of 1808, fell into decay, it took twenty years of thorny negotiations between those concerned and their protecting Powers before it could be replaced. From lesser

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matters the dispute extended to greater: the Crimean War began, as Kinglake tells us, "in the heart of Jerusalem, in the Holy Sepulchre itself." Some of the parties were quite prepared to see the Rotunda roofless rather than abate one jot of their pretensions in favour of their rivals; and the wrangling might have been prolonged indefinitely had not the Emperor Alexander II. actively intervened and, in understanding with Napoleon III. and the Sultan, erected in 1868 the present ugly iron dome. As an example of the difficulties entailed by joint occupancy in the Sepulchre may be cited the case of its mediæval belfry. Three sides of this interesting structure of the twelfth century are in good repair because their ownership is not divided and not in doubt. The possession of the fourth side (an important aspect of possession in the Holy Places is the right to maintain) is claimed by more than one community and, as none of the claimants will allow the others to undertake the most necessary repairs lest by repairing they should reinforce their claims, this wall remains unpointed and in a state of palpable neglect. The belfry thus suggests one of those paintings to be seen in the shop-windows of cleaners and restorers of pictures, the one half brilliant and varnished, the other dark, mouldering and coated with dirt.

The central object of the Rotunda is the Tomb itself, a two-roomed chapel rebuilt, like the Rotunda, after the fire of 1808. It is constructed of red Palestinian marble in the deplorable Levantine taste of the time by a Greek architect of Mytilene, and it is in the eyes of countless thousands, despite its unworthy appearance, the most sacred spot upon



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earth. Western ideas of reverence are sometimes shocked by the familiarity with which Eastern Christians treat their places of devotion. Because families of Oriental pilgrims, pernoctating within the church, will squat down in front of the Tomb of Christ and there consume unconcernedly their evening meal, it does not mean that they will not immediately afterwards prostrate themselves inside it in a very frenzy of adoration. They feel as much at home inside the Holy Sepulchre as in their own houses; indeed, the Rotunda is literally the home of scores of monks, whose bedrooms up in the galleries overlook the very Tomb itself. To illustrate this attitude of mind toward the Sepulchre, which for want of a better word I am impelled to call domestic, I would quote the following sentence from an official report laid before Parliament in 1854, during the course of the negotiations regarding the dome: "After the Corban Bairam festival the Commissioner, Affif Bey, with a suite of local effendis, met the three Patriarchs, Greek, Latin and Armenian, in the Church of the Resurrection, just in front of the Holy Sepulchre itself, and under the great dome; there they were regaled with sherbets, confectionery, and pipes at the expense of the three convents, who vied with each other in making luxurious display on the occasion." But it is in the annual ceremony, or "miracle," of the Holy Fire, performed on the Saturday before the Orthodox Easter, that this domestic attitude finds its most complete expression. From an early hour on Good Friday the Rotunda begins to fill with pilgrims of all nations and of all ages, with Russians and Copts, with Orthodox Arabs from

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every part of Palestine, Syria and Transjordan, with tottering old men and women who have come to leave their bones in the Holy Land, with sucklings in their mothers' arms. Wooden hutches, looking rather like large dog-kennels, have been rigged up in tiers around the walls, and in these the more favoured or the more wealthy spend the night, while those who cannot afford to pay for such special accommodation make shift as best they may on the stone flags of the church. By Saturday morning every nook and cranny is occupied by a dense and feverish throng, and even in the courtyard outside, and on the roofs which overlook it, there is not a pinnacle and projection, however perilous, that has not been manned by those who cannot find room inside. Some, like the Stylites of old, are perched on the tops of pillars; and an apparently endless stream of persons ascends the swaying ladders, placed against the walls of golden-brown sandstone, to the dizziest of ledges. Time-honoured custom assigns these coigns of vantage to the Arab pilgrims according to their districts: the people of Nazareth and Damascus, Salt and Kerak, Tripoli and Aleppo have each their appointed eyrie. Suddenly, at ten o'clock, the bells of the Holy Sepulchre break out into that clang of strange and unforgettable rhythm which is the signal that the Orthodox Patriarch is leaving the Patriarchal palace on his way to the Sepulchre, and the crowd both inside and outside the Church becomes tense with anticipation. There now takes place what is perhaps the most characteristically "domestic" episode of the morning, the one which, at all events, emphasizes the most unmistakably

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the essential Orientalism of the Christians of the country. Although the Rotunda is so closely packed that it seems impossible that it should hold another person, there forces its way into it from the east a procession of the "young men," the *shabâb*, wild-looking young peasants of the Christian villages of the neighbourhood, worked up into a state of the highest excitement. Hoarsely they chant their topical verses in a heavily stressed measure, thus

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in a measure such as Moslem dervishes employ when shouting themselves into ecstasy at their *zîkr*. The burden of their song is some such stanza as this :

“ Melek George ya Fasîh !  
Ya Nasr Dîn al-Mesîh,  
Melek George ya Mansur !  
Bi seîfak haddeîna al-sur.  
Melek George la tinham,  
Askerak amma tiltam ! ”

which may be roughly translated as follows :

“ Father of eloquence, George the King !  
Defending the faith of Christ the Lord,  
Ever victorious, George the King !  
The walls have fallen by thy sword.  
Be not troubled, O George the King,  
Thy soldiers in hosts are gathering ! ”

At their head, standing on the shoulders of two of his fellows and swinging his body in every direction, is borne their leader, a frenzied individual with kohl-blackened eyes, who, as he brandishes his sword furiously about him and finally executes a

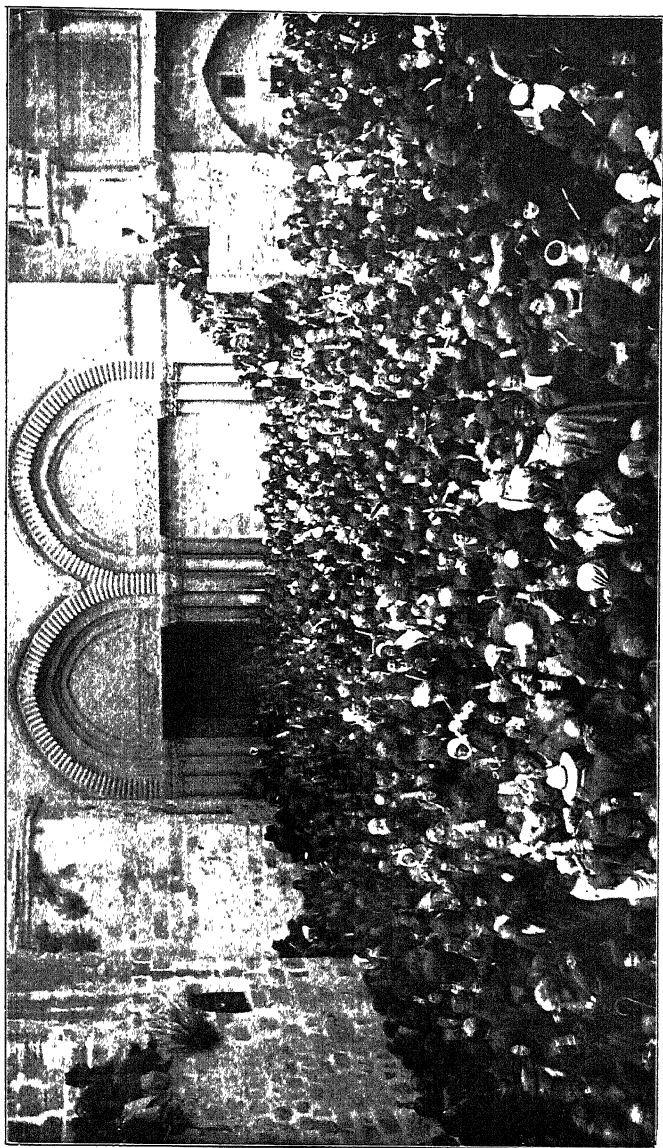
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sword-dance on the heads of his companions, suggests a Persian devotee at Muharram rather than a participant in a Christian service. By this time the chants of the *shabâb* have been taken up by the crowd, and the pounding of their heavy rhythm fills the dome. Soon the vanguard of the ecclesiastical procession is seen to emerge from behind the iconostasis of the Chorus Dominorum, the banners and their bearers swaying from side to side as the police with great difficulty force a way for them through the solid mass of humanity. Somehow or other they reach the Rotunda and pass thrice round the Tomb, first the choir, then the priests and Archimandrites, then the Archbishops, finally the Patriarch vested in white and gold brocade and crowned with a jewelled mitre. After the third circuit the Patriarch is led to the door of the Tomb, at which, following the precedent of his Turkish predecessor, the British Governor of Jerusalem has taken up his position with his staff. Here he is divested of cope and mitre while the seals of the door of the Tomb—previously affixed by the Moslem gate-keeper in the presence of the Governor as a visible precaution against fraud—are broken. Hastily the Patriarch and an Armenian *vartabed*<sup>1</sup> (it should be explained that the Armenians participate with the Orthodox in the ceremony) are pushed inside, all lights are extinguished, and there ensues a pause of painfully strained expectancy not unmixed with apprehension. For in the pandemonium which will shortly be let loose anything may happen, and the toll of lives which the Holy Fire has taken in the course of its

<sup>1</sup> A member of the Armenian higher regular clergy.

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history must run into thousands. Alone in 1834, when the miracle was celebrated in the presence of Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt, three hundred victims were carried to their burial and two hundred more were seriously injured. These exceptionally heavy casualties were due in part to a delay in the appearance of the Fire, for Ibrahim was late and, clearly, the Christian miracle could not be accomplished until the all-powerful Mohammedan Pasha had arrived. Nowadays the people are not left long in suspense. In a minute or two a shout of triumph goes up from the crowd. A brand, lit by the fire which the vast majority of those present believe to have come down from heaven, is being pushed by a shaking hand—the Patriarch's and the Armenian *vartabed's*—through a small orifice on each side of the Tomb, and those who are near struggle desperately and regardless of each other's safety to be the first to light their taper from it and thus to ensure their eternal salvation. In the twinkling of an eye the fire has passed from hand to hand (all present have provided themselves with bundles of candles), and the Church, hitherto in semi-darkness, is in an instant aflicker and ablaze. Into every corner and recess of the building, around the galleries and up to the domes, rushes the new fire of the Resurrection year, so that within a few seconds there is no spot, however remote or lofty, which is not scintillating with a spark of the divine light. It is a sight of singular beauty, this leaping of fire over the sea of humanity but, with this one exception, the spectacle is grim, horrible, barbaric. We look, not upon the descent of a lambent Pentecostal flame but upon the turmoil of an Inferno,



AFTER THE HOLY FIRE  
The crowd leaving the Holy Sepulchre.



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intensified by the terrible roar of a mob delirious with excitement, by the wild swaying of an irresponsible crowd gone mad. Women shriek, faint, are trodden under foot, then somehow are pulled up and passed out of the Church over the heads of the people; terrified children are thrown from person to person, like the ball at water-polo, till they are out of the danger zone; men are crushed against the Tomb by irresistible periodical surges until one wonders why their ribs are not cracked like egg-shell. Meanwhile the pilgrims in their frenzy apply the bunches of lighted tapers to their heads, their hands, their breasts, as a purification from their sins; and the smoke and heat issuing from the thousands of burning, guttering candles become almost unbearable. In the midst of this hideous confusion the *shabâb* again come to the fore, this time to clear a narrow passage through the crowd on either side of the Tomb to the exits from the building. Down each of these lanes speeds a runner with torch aflame (repeating, though he knows it not, the *lampadophoria* of the ancient Greeks), the one to bear the Holy Fire southward to the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem, the other northward to Ramallah and Nazareth and beyond. Before the war the Fire was borne, also, to Jaffa, whence it was carried by ship to Odessa for distribution through the length and breadth of Russia.

The centre of interest now shifts to the entrance of the Tomb, where an animated struggle is in progress. For the Patriarch and his Armenian colleague are on the point of emerging, and certain persons have the right to await them at the door



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and to light their candles from the bunches of tapers which the two prelates carry in metal torch-holders. An Armenian and a Jacobite priest are there, palpitating with excitement, also a Coptic pilgrim who, for a great price has bought at auction in the Coptic convent the privilege to be the first of his race to receive the Fire at the Patriarch's hand. The door of the Tomb, an exceedingly narrow one, opens inwards; and the three are so eager for their fire that, were they not held back by policemen specially chosen for the task, they would rush into the Tomb and effectively prevent the two within from coming out. Finally the Patriarch and his companion stagger out of the little chapel, holding aloft their blazing torches, and the crowd instinctively surges towards them. Before it can approach, the Patriarch is seized by half a dozen British officials who have volunteered for the purpose, and is rushed exhausted, recumbent on their shoulders, up the Chorus Dominorum and deposited in safety behind the iconostasis. Curzon, describing the Holy Fire of 1834, says that the Patriarch feigns insensibility on these occasions so that the pilgrims may imagine him to be overcome with the glory of the Almighty, from whose immediate presence they believe him to have returned. But in truth there is little need for him to simulate unconsciousness. The physical ordeal through which he has passed, the menacing surge of which he is the object, the crowd, the noise, the heat which encompass him, would amply suffice to render faint the central figure of the Holy Fire.

Scarcely has the Patriarch been borne away than a fresh procession begins to circumambulate the Tomb, on this occasion formed by the Mono-

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physite Churches, Armenian, Jacobite and Coptic. Qavasses in embroidered Albanian dress make a way for it by beating the floor with their heavy batons, silver-topped but shod with iron. First come the Armenians, led by two deacons holding each a silver *nef* containing incense. Magnificent beyond all others in Jerusalem are the vestments of the Armenians, their colours mellowed by great age, their embroidered fabrics rigid with seed-pearls and rubies and cabochon emeralds. Their prelates wear enormous mitres, of the Roman shape but of dimensions all their own; as they pass thrice round the Tomb they bless the people with a little hand-cross encrusted with precious stones, from which is suspended a fall of lace. Next come the Copts with a choir of Egyptian pilgrims, swarthy fellahîn from the Nile delta who look strangely out of place in dalmatics of purple velvet and tall, stiff head-dresses of the same material. Last come the Jacobites, whose Church is one of the most interesting of the early Christian communities of the East, their vestments red, green and yellow, their choir-boys more vociferous than any others. The Jacobite Church, like the Nestorian, provides no mitre for its bishops, who have to content themselves with a sort of embroidered amice, which they drape, when vested, over the black turban of their daily wear. Yet this unusual headgear lends the Jacobite Bishop of Jerusalem a patriarchal and even mysterious air as he processes round the Rotunda, a hooded, shrouded figure, blessing the crowd with the little cross carried in his right hand, holding in his left the pastoral staff of two serpents' heads hissing at one another over orb and cross. Walking behind

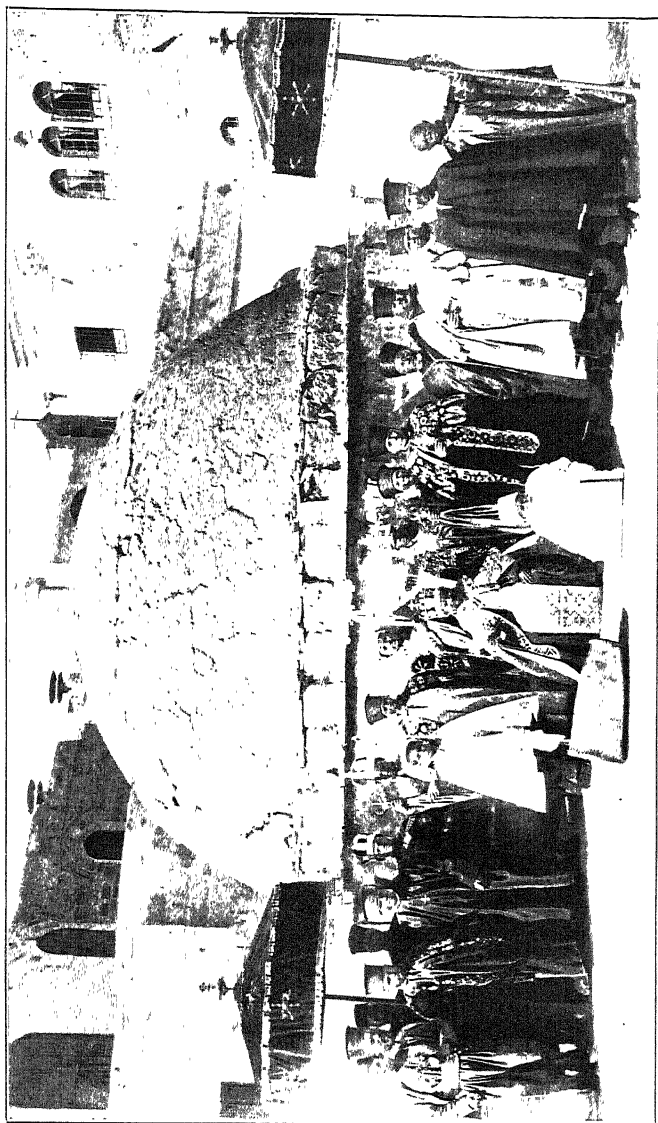
## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

the Bishop are one or two Indian priests of the Malabar Christians, last surviving example of the missionary activity of the Nestorians but now mostly in communion with the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch.

As this motley procession forces its way through the crowd and the smoke, there rises from a score of censers another sort of smoke which gives to the atmosphere a welcome element of fragrance. There rises, too, a din of eastern chants in languages beside which the New Testament Greek of the Orthodox Church sounds strangely modern. The speech of Phrygians, of Abraham, of the Pharaohs is preserved in the litanies which these monks of Asia and Africa are screaming in weird cacophony; in more respects than one does the kindling of the fire recall the early ages of mankind, the dawn of history.

There is a picturesque story of the seventeenth century to the effect that Ferdinand I., Grand Duke of Tuscany, anxious to secure for his Medicean Chapel a shrine which would exceed in sanctity any other in Italy, even the Holy House of Loreto itself, begged his eastern ally Fakhr ed-Dîn to carry off for him the Saviour's Tomb. Had the Druse Amir succeeded in this enterprise, had he contrived to remove the Sepulchre of Christ from Jerusalem to Florence, the lives of subsequent victims of the Holy Fire would have been saved but the world would have been the poorer by the disappearance of the most amazing ceremony in all Christendom.

A function far more placid is that of the Wáshing of the Feet, which takes place in the forecourt of the Holy Sepulchre on the Orthodox Maundy



ABYSSINIAN ABBOT AND CLERGY ON THE ROOF OF S. HELENA'S CHAPEL

On the left the Apse of the Holy Sepulchre.

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narrative is faithfully reproduced. A sermon preached (since the British Mandate in English) from an open-air pulpit brings the ceremony to a close. The bells peal, the Patriarch dons again his sumptuous vestments, and the procession re-forms and leaves the court. The quaintest touch comes at the end. As the Patriarch passes through the crowd he asperges it with a posy of sweet basil, dipped in the water wherein he has washed the feet; and the pilgrims scramble eagerly towards the empty platform, hastening to soak their handkerchiefs in the basin before it is removed by the attendants.

From the ambulatory behind the Chorus Domini-norum a flight of steps leads down to S. Helena's Chapel, a venerable sanctuary dating in part from the seventh century. But the architectural interest of the chapel, although it is considerable, is exceeded by the human interest attaching to the settlement on its roof, above which its cupola projects like the upturned half of an egg. For hither, after being ousted from more eligible parts of the Church by their stronger rivals, have gradually retreated the Abyssinian monks, who have built their huts on the flat roof of the chapel among the ruins of the mediæval cloister of the Augustinian Canons. The Abyssinians may well claim not only the sympathy but the respect of their fellow-Christians, for they have preserved in the heart of Africa, surrounded by Moslem and pagan peoples, the faith to which they were converted in the fourth century. That the Abyssinian Church, isolated for centuries from the rest of Christendom, should have developed peculiarities of its own is not surprising. The royal



THE WASHING OF THE FEET BY THE LATE PATRIARCH  
DAMIANOS.

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House of Ethiopia, as is known, claims descent from King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, and this claim is reflected in certain Jewish practices adopted by the Church. The Church of Abyssinia keeps holy both Saturday and Sunday; on its altars it venerates an object called the *tabot*, which is the replica of the Ark of the Covenant brought to Abyssinia by the Queen of Sheba on her return from Jerusalem. Apart from its Jewish features, it is the only Church to which it has occurred to canonize Pontius Pilate; the festival of this original saint is kept in Abyssinia on the 25th June. The rulers of Abyssinia take the deepest interest in the national Church and in its representatives at the Holy Sepulchre, and from time to time a picturesque embassy from the Lion of Judah (or should it be the Lioness of Judah, now that an Empress-regnant sits on the throne of Menelik?) finds its way to Jerusalem. The Abyssinians in the Holy City generally hold their services in a circular church built outside the walls by Menelik's wife, the Empress Taitu; but once a year, on the evening of Holy Fire day, they indulge in the dissipation of a procession around S. Helena's dome. In a tent erected for the occasion is held the preliminary part of the service, at an altar laden with icons depicting black-faced saints. That this is African Christianity is made manifest by the tomtoms beaten by monks squatting on the floor; other monks rattle sistra indistinguishable from those found in the tomb of Tutankhamen. The priests not occupied in these ways proceed to "dance before the Lord" to the accompaniment of noises rarely heard at a Christian service outside Abyssinia.



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Then the clergy form up and pass out of the tent on to the roof, the Abbot walking last under a gorgeous State umbrella, wearing a triple crown. The procession that succeeds is not a meaningless gyration: something wistful, something pathetic underlies a performance which is apt to strike the unseeing western eye as merely grotesque. As they shuffle three times round the cupola with their curious dancing step to the rhythm of rattle and drum, these simple black men from Central Africa are looking for the body of Christ. "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre and we know not where they have laid Him" is the burden of their refrain, and the ceremony, unlike that of the Holy Fire, ends in a minor key. It is not until the following morning that it finds its conclusion in the feast of Easter, when the white man's bells and the black man's drums proclaim to Jerusalem that "Christ is risen."

And so might be prolonged almost indefinitely the tale of the strange and curious sights and scenes in which the Holy Sepulchre abounds. On its innumerable relics and traditional sites I have preferred not to dwell; it is to its human element rather than to these that the Sepulchre owes its incomparable interest. That the Stone of Unction, placed where it is in 1810, may occupy the site of the original stone is infinitely less important than the devotion lavished upon it by countless pilgrims; that men are still invested in the Latin chapel, as they were in the Middle Ages, with the Order of the Sepulchre is a better object-lesson in the endurance of tradition than the precise age of the sword wherewith they receive the accolade. The cere-

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monies I have endeavoured to describe draw their true significance not from their accessories but from the emotions they evoke; and it is through the variety and intensity of these emotions, as well as through its unique position as a museum of ecclesiastical ethnology, that the Holy Sepulchre is supreme among the shrines of the Christian world.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE DESERT ROAD

#### I

PALESTINE and Syria, bounded on the west by the blue waters of the Mediterranean, on the east by the grey and stony sea of the great Syrian desert, have been likened to a peninsula, narrow and mountainous as is Italy. And indeed this comparison is more than mere fancy. For as truly as Jaffa and Haifa, Beirut and Tripoli are the Amalfi and Naples, the Leghorn and Genoa of this Italy of the Near East, so are Damascus and Homs, Hama and Aleppo its Bari and Ancona, its Rimini and Venice. They are its sally-ports to a vast expanse, to a veritable inland sea, where clusters of black Beduin tents tack hither and thither across the sand and the steppe like black-sailed argosies across the Adriatic.

The first stage of our journey to Mosul lay along the high ridge, the backbone of this peninsula, from Jerusalem to Nazareth; the next, along the western coast from Haifa to Beirut. Of Beirut all that need be said is that it is a Levantine Marseilles, an emporium of trade and a place of middlemen, inhabited, as was once Marseilles, by keen-witted Phœnicians. Beirut, when it yet lay under the Turks, was singularly lacking in the charm of which few eastern towns are wholly devoid; and now,

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with the material improvements wrought under French administration, it has become more like Marseilles than ever. Only in its background has it the advantage over its French counterpart, for even the Alpes Maritimes, charming as they are, cannot compete with the mulberry-clad, snow-clad Lebanon. Yet here, too, the parallel is perpetuated. From one of the Lebanese foothills above the little port of Juneh there towers, like Notre Dame de la Garde over the Gulf of Lyons, a colossal statue of the Virgin, embracing in her benediction that once busy Phœnician coast, that hot-house of Asiatic gods, from Berytus itself, past the river Adonis, to the tombs and temples of pagan Byblos, which is now Jebeil. Here, in this narrow strip of coast between the Lebanon and the sea, foregathered the divinities of the ancient East, native Phœnician gods and gods from distant Babylonia, before they extended their sway into the West and undermined with their exotic rituals the pristine virtue of Greece and Rome. From these hills and valleys did Baal and Melkarth, did Eshmun and Resef-Mikal, divine Astarte and her adored Tammuz look westward at Cypriote Olympus, faintly discernible on the horizon; from this shore, leaving their uncouth eastern names behind them, traverse the intervening sea and burst upon the Hellenic world as Zeus and Herakles, Asklepios and Apollo, Aphrodite and beauteous Adonis. In the lovely valley—midway between Beirut and Jebeil—that bears his name, was born the lad Adonis, the beloved of Aphrodite, and in the self-same valley was gored to death by a jealous boar. Through the thickets and brambles that fringed the

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stream Aphrodite hastened to him, hearing his cries, and from her bleeding feet there sprang the wild rose that even now "fledges the river's lip" with its delicate pink. From the deeper sanguine of the life-blood of Adonis, ebbing away as he lay in the arms of his goddess, grew the tender anemone; while yearly, in the spring, the river runs red in memory of his untimely end.

"Thammuz came next behind,  
Whose annual wound in Lebanon allured  
The Syrian maidens to lament his fate  
In amorous ditties all a summer's day,  
While smooth Adonis from his native rock  
Ran purple to the sea, supposed with blood  
Of Thammuz yearly wounded."

There are some who would ascribe this phenomenon to a mineral deposit in the soil, carried down from the mountains by the winter rains; but I prefer to think with Milton and the villagers of Afqa that the stream, at the return of the season of life, is incarnadined by the ichor of its eponymous hero.

καὶ ποταμοὶ κλαίοντι τὰ πένθεα τᾶς Ἀφροδίτας,  
καὶ παγαὶ τὸν Ἀδωνιν ἐν ὥρεσι δακρύοντι,  
ἄνθεα δ' ἐξ ὀδύνας ἐρυθραίνονται, ἃ δὲ Κυθήρα  
πάντας ἀνὰ κναμῶς, ἀνὰ πᾶν νάπος οἰκτρὸν αἰδεῖ  
'αἰαῖ τὴν Κυθήρειαν, ἀπώλετο καλὸς Ἀδωνις.'

"And the rivers bewail the sorrows of Aphrodite, and the wells are weeping Adonis on the mountains. The flowers flush red for anguish, and Cytherea through all the mountain-knees, through every dell doth shrill the piteous dirge:

'Woe, woe for Cytherea, he hath perished,  
The lovely Adonis.'"

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In this corner of the East, as in many another, Christianity and paganism are never far apart : in the words of the brothers Tharaud "le son aigu des flûtes et les cymbales païennes accompagnent toujours ici, pour une oreille attentive, le tintement des cloches." So it is not surprising if we pass within a few miles from memories of laughter-loving Aphrodite and her "rose-cheek'd" youth to those of the Lady Melisende, inspiring from the turrets of her castle of Tripoli in the knights and poets of the West a very different passion. In the love of the *Princesse Lointaine*, the queen of Outremer, an intangible, ethereal love that could never be consummated, Jaufré Rudel and his Troubadour successors expressed the very essence of what poetry underlay the spirit of the Crusades. It was a legend, if you will, a figment of poets' imaginations, a melancholy if beautiful illusion; but it marked what change had been wrought in the minds of men since they celebrated, in this very region, the amorous adventures of the Paphian goddess. "Abide with me, Adonis," laments, in the words of the Greek poet, the sorrowing Aphrodite, "hapless Adonis abide, that this last time of all I may possess thee, that I may cast myself about thee, and lips with lips may mingle. Awake, Adonis, for a little while, and kiss me yet again, the latest kiss. Nay kiss me but for a moment, but the lifetime of a kiss, till from thine inmost soul into my lips, into my heart, thy life-breath ebb and till I drain thy sweet love-philtre and drink down all thy love."

Compare with this passionate outburst the mystic longing of the gentle Prince of Blaye :

"Jamais d'amour je ne jouirai, si je ne jouis de

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cet amour lointain, car femme plus noble ni meilleure je ne connais, ni de près, ni de loin. Sa valeur est si pure et si parfaite que je voudrais, pour elle, être appelé captif là-bas, au pays des Sarrasins.”

“ Car c’est chose suprême  
D’aimer sans qu’on vous aime,  
D’aimer toujours, quand même,  
Sans cesse,  
D’une amour incertaine,  
Plus noble d’être vaine . . .  
Et j’aime la lointaine  
Princesse !

“ Car c’est chose divine  
D’aimer lorsqu’on devine,  
Rêve, inventé, imagine  
A peine. . . .  
Le seul rêve intéresse.  
Vivre sans rêve, qu’est-ce ?  
Et j’aime la Princesse  
Lointaine ! ”

But this is a digression into scenes of previous wanderings, for which I must ask the reader’s indulgence. On this occasion we travelled no farther along the Phœnician coast than Beirut, whence we turned eastward to climb the passes of the Lebanon, still deep in snow. Leaving on our left Brumana with its umbrella pines and its Maronite monasteries, we passed Aley, the summer station of the French Administration, a cluster of villas, cafés and casinos. Next came Ain Sofar with more casinos, whither wealthy Syrians resort to gamble when the dog-days drive them mountainwards from the moist and torrid coast; soon afterwards we attained, at

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Murad, the highest point on the Damascus road. At Shtora, famous for its wines, we enter the rich plain of the Biqa, the true Cœlesyria of the ancients, and then, by the pass which separates Hermon from Anti-Libanus, thread our way into Damascus.

I do not propose to inflict on the reader a description of Damascus, which revealed itself to me, revisiting it after the lapse of sixteen years, as more than ever a metropolis of the desert. Intermingled with the usual barrack-like offices of a Turkish provincial capital, with the cafés and cinemas of post-war development, with the typical modern Syrian dwellings, tasteless boxes that are all windows, with the true Damascene houses of blank outer walls concealing beautiful *patios* and tinkling fountains, are thousands of mud and plaster hovels. Damascus looks not towards the West, as does Beirut, but eastward to the Syrian desert and southward towards Mecca. The late Monsieur Maurice Barrès, in his *Enquête aux Pays du Levant*,<sup>1</sup> affected to have found that “à Damas se rencontrent, non pour tâcher de se détruire l’un l’autre, mais pour se comprendre et s’unir, l’Orient et l’Occident.” I traverse that statement point-blank. In few oriental cities is the contrast between East and West brought into sharper relief, is the gulf wider, than in Damascus. Had Monsieur Barrès forgotten the events that led to the armed intervention, of which he was so proud, of Napoleon III. in 1860? Had he forgotten the genesis of the song “Partant pour la Syrie”? No, the nucleus of Damascus, the focus of its mentality, is not the super-café built since the era of the French Mandate on the embankment of

<sup>1</sup> Paris, 1924.



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the Barada; it is now, as it has ever been, the great Mosque of the Omayyad Khalifs.

What al-Azhar is to Cairo, what the Haram esh-Sherif is to Moslem Jerusalem, that is the Omayyad Mosque to Damascus. It is also the city's only outstanding monument and, to be properly appreciated, should be seen before Jerusalem. Its courtyard is noble but it lacks the glorious spaciousness, the wide prospect of the Haram esh-Sherif; the mosque itself, while more impressive, despite its restoration, than the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, pales beside the quintessential beauty of the Dome of the Rock. I recall, as we went out of the mosque to continue our eastward journey, two small episodes. The first was a vision of the mosque attendants busily sweeping its carpets with branches of date-palm; the second, caught just outside the gate, one of an itinerant vendor of fruit polishing his lemons with a clothes-brush.

Two motor-routes traverse the Syrian desert from Damascus to the Euphrates and disclose themselves to the traveller by the tracks of the cars which have been plying backwards and forwards at regular intervals since the end of 1923. One route runs due east to Ramadi; the other, longer but more interesting, first leads north-eastward to Palmyra and thence south-eastward until it strikes the Euphrates at Hit. We followed the first route on our outward course, returning by the second; and nowhere else have I seen mirages so numerous and so deceptive as those which we pursued throughout the journey.

This Badiet esh-Sham, this immense area of uncultivated land which gradually widens towards the

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south until it merges in the sandy wastes of inner Arabia, is deserted, even by nomads, in the summer, but in the winter and early spring the rain and the dew combine to produce, here and there, enough pasture and moisture for occasional Beduin with their camels and their sheep. We spent one of our two nights in the desert in an encampment of these people, leaning against high-pommelled camel-saddles around a fire of dried thorn while our hosts, who were of the Rowalla, smoked and asked news of the Khalifate and Iraq and Ibn Saud and the Hejaz Treaty. Declining the proffered sheep, we sipped bitter but aromatic Bedu coffee, a thin yellowish-green liquid that is certainly more cardamom than coffee and is so strong a stimulant that only the bottom of the cup is filled, as the women of the Sheikh's family keeked curiously over the camel-hair partition that separated their side of the tent from the guest-chamber. The Rowalla, an important branch of the large federation of clans called the Aneiza, spend the summer by the Meadow Lakes of Damascus, the famous *Ager Damascenus*, and the winter roaming the desert. It is doubtless in Damascus, at the hands of enterprising Armenian dentists, that the men cause their front teeth, however perfect they may be, to be plated with gold in the manner of American negro pugilists, a form of vanity that is becoming all too common among the Arabs, in the desert as well as in the sown. Smiles that are not even chryselephantine, smiles of unrelieved gold now flash from the mouths of turbaned and sandalled men in flowing robes, and are regrettable enough when encountered in the *sugs* of a town. Still more were they to be deplored in these

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black tents of Kedar, two hundred miles from any settled habitation. Even mid-desert is no longer immune from the onslaughts of western civilization; and young Shami ibn Shalan, the Sheikh's nine-year-old son, who did the honours of the camp in his father's absence with the dignity and *savoir faire* of a grown man combined with something of the haughtiness of a spoiled child, betrayed an uncanny knowledge of the latest types of motor-car, gained from close observation of those which travel between Damascus and Baghdad.

As we began to near the Euphrates we occasionally crossed or ran parallel with the ploughed furrow which indicates the air-route from Amman. Bird life here, as throughout the desert, was singularly varied and abundant. Sand-grouse were so numerous that many were caught on the radiator of our car, and we must have put up millions in the course of the journey across the desert and back. Bustards were not uncommon; and it was pleasant to see red-legged snipe drinking daintily, after rain, at the edge of some shallow *wadi*. On our last morning we ran into a herd of gazelle that must have numbered not far short of a thousand, a beautiful sight as the graceful little beasts scampered across the desert, the whites of their tails bobbing up and down in the clear light of the "Persian dawn."

A night at Ramadi and the resumption of our journey on the following day brought us to Baghdad in the afternoon, in time to leave by the evening train for Qalat Sharqat, the end of the railway that leads towards Mosul. For, although the Germans endowed Mosul, somewhat prematurely, with a

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railway station, no railway has reached it yet; and travellers from Baghdad leave the train at Qalat Sharqat, where once stood Asshur, the city of Tiglath-Pileser, and now stand the temporary huts of a temporary railway terminus. Here we embarked in one of the agile American motor-cars which meet the trains, and traversed, for the eighty miles that separated us from Mosul, a steppe covered with scarlet tulips, mauve anemones and small wild iris of a watery blue. Some five hours of bounding over the wilds of the Jezireh<sup>1</sup> brought us, towards evening, to the outskirts of Mosul where, in a field, some Nestorian boys were playing football. And among them, good lad, was his Holiness Mar Shimun XXI., Katholikos and Patriarch of the East, who, having "held the Chair" of Mar Addai<sup>2</sup> since 1920, has now attained the age of sixteen years.

### 2

There is nothing about the distant view of Baghdad that suggests the Arabian Nights except, perhaps, the twin golden domes of Kadhimein. Nor is there much when the city is seen from within. The Baghdad of the Khalifs lay mainly on the western side of the Tigris, and the present Baghdad, which lies in greater part on the eastern side, only

<sup>1</sup> Before Iraq became the name of the new kingdom it denoted the southern half of Mesopotamia, the flat, low-lying, alluvial plain between Baghdad and the Persian Gulf. The northern half of the land between the two rivers was called al-Jezireh, "the Island."

<sup>2</sup> S. Thaddæus.

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arose after the old city had been wiped out by the Mongols. Much more would, we may suppose, have survived the ravages of Hulagu Khan in 1258 had Baghdad been left alone thereafter by those wanton annihilators not only of lives and cities but of works of irrigation—the one source of Babylon's wealth—created by the toil and science of a hundred and more generations of men. While Baghdad was yet staggering under the effects of its sack by the aptly named Hulagu<sup>1</sup> it received its deathblow from Timur the Lame, who destroyed it all but completely in 1393. The Baghdad which arose after these scourges of mankind had passed away was the pale shadow of its brilliant predecessor. Subsequent occupations by Persian monarchs did not tend to revive it, and its conquest by the Ottoman Sultan Murad IV. in 1638 heralded nearly three centuries of stagnation under the government of the Turks. But if the Turkish occupation contributed little to the architectural beauties of Baghdad, it added a gem to those of Constantinople. The delicate little Baghdad Kiosk, with which Sultan Murad embellished the Old Seraglio of the Turkish capital in commemoration of his conquest, is as we have seen one of the masterpieces of the Turkish craftsman, singing from the heights of Stambul the swan-song of later Ottoman art.

It is difficult for one who did not know the pre-War Baghdad to realize how existence was possible for its citizens before the Turks, in 1916, carved a broad thoroughfare, parallel with the Tigris, through the maze of narrow little lanes and tortuous alleys

<sup>1</sup> Hulagu is the Mongol word for robber.

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which otherwise constitute the town. New Street, hideous as it is with its mustard-coloured brick, its painted iron and its general resemblance to the commercial quarter of a second-rate Indian port, is Baghdad's only artery of traffic other than the Tigris itself. With few exceptions the streets which it crosses at right angles are far too narrow for carriage or car; and the kiosks of the houses, stained, as a rule, a dingy and singularly unattractive red, almost touch their vis-à-vis. Even in these older streets the brickwork is generally painted an ugly drab or yellow; residential Baghdad is eminently unhappy in its colour scheme.

Pleasanter are the mosques and the bazaars. The latter, if not ancient, take much of their architectural character, and especially the strikingly shallow brick domes that surmount the cross-roads, from one of the few survivors of Abbasid Baghdad, the Mostansirié *medresé*. This college was founded in the thirteenth century by the Khalif al-Mostansir for the study of Qoranic law, and the builders of the *sug* could have followed no happier model. It is now incorporated in the bazaar and is used as a custom-house while, near by, its noble contemporary, the Khan Orthma, is a storehouse for bales of cotton. On the whole, the bazaars of Baghdad are more interesting in their architecture and in those who frequent them than in their wares: the latter are nowadays, whatever they may have been in the past, frankly disappointing to those not in search of the manufactures of Europe and the United States. As for the mosques, it is necessary to bear in mind the breach in continuity between the Baghdad of the present day and that of the

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Abbasid Khalifs. Few are of earlier date than the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, and one looks among them in vain for examples of Arab art in its prime. Yet these later shrines preserve something of the old tradition, and they are not without a certain grace of their own. The brick has mellowed to a soft brownish pink and the domes are covered with tiles of a vivid turquoise blue. To compare the tiles of Baghdad with those of Constantinople and Jerusalem would be to compare the baroque of Baalbek with the purity of the Parthenon; even greater is the gulf between them and the faience of Konia and Brusa. But they provide a pleasant splash of colour, blending well enough with the tones of the brick; and, if some of the domes have lost so many of their tiles that they look for all the world like a pate that has gone bald in patches, the gaps are filled, as in Mosul, by the nests of "Hajji Laklak," the pious and friendly stork. "What can the bald man owe to the barber's mother?" asks the Punjabi proverb. What, I would ask, can the domes of Baghdad have owed to the Turkish Ministry of Evqaf before the arrival of the British in Iraq?

If Baghdad suggests modern India, the impress of its northern suburb Kadhimein is definitely Persian. It is not the Persia of Nadir Shah that we see here; still less is it that of the golden Sassanid age. It is the more stolid, bourgeois Persia of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Persia of Fath Ali Shah and Hajji Baba. Kadhimein is almost, indeed, a Persian enclave, for those of the inhabitants who are not actually subjects of the Shah are for the most part of Persian blood. There

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is a Persian Consulate, situated, very conveniently, in the neighbourhood of the mosque—very conveniently, because the Consul is sometimes kind enough to allow visitors to survey from his roof the famous shrine of the seventh and ninth Imâms which Shiah intolerance closes to non-Moslems. The mosque is of the usual Shiah type but is built on the heroic scale; it is a blaze of gold, of pink and blue tiles, of mother-of-pearl and of mirrors, that completely conceal the material of the fabric. But the decoration is too lavish, is laid on with too heavy a hand. Unless the taste be perfect, it requires the mellowing touch of centuries to refine ornateness into magnificence, magnificence into beauty. And the taste of the builders and rebuilders of the mosque of Kadhimein, little of which is of earlier date than the last century, was anything but perfect. So, at least, it seems to me, who prefer to see stalactite vaulting in the original brick or stucco rather than overlaid with pieces of looking-glass. Nevertheless the effect, at a distance, of golden domes and gleaming minarets is a striking one; and the great court with its riot of pink roses on blue tiles, with its seven porches barred by heavy chains, is unquestionably impressive. The streets of tall Persian houses and eaves that almost meet have a decided charm; and the people who throng them are an epitome of the Shiah world. Itinerant begging dervishes with alms-box of polished nut slung across sturdy shoulders, Seyyids whose green turbans proclaim their descent from the Prophet, dour-looking *Mujtahids*<sup>1</sup> portentous with learning, mingle with unsophisticated pilgrims from the

<sup>1</sup> The highest rank in the hierarchy of Shiah divines.



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villages of Iran and with caravans of corpses of pious Persian Shiahs, brought for interment to the holy places of Iraq. And they who derive their livelihood from the traffic in pilgrims alive and dead are not the least numerous, not the least unprepossessing, of the dwellers around the tombs of the two Kadhims, reaping a rich harvest from those who aspire to the title, coveted by every good Shiah, of "Hajji, Kerbelai, Meshedi."

### 3

From Mosul to Baghdad, from Baghdad to Felluja,<sup>1</sup> where we crossed the Euphrates, and from Felluja to Ramadi the homeward route followed that of the outward journey. But from Ramadi, instead of turning westward into the desert, we followed the right bank of the Euphrates until we reached the Is of Herodotus, now the town of Hit.

Hit is a settlement of mud, built on a hill of mud, and it stands, according to some, on the site of the Garden of Eden. But if Hit was once Paradise, it is now a very tolerable imitation of Gehenna; and there is no doubt that its present master is Beelzebub, the Lord of Flies. It is a place of heat and of insect pests; and over it there brood, as a pall, the mephitic fumes of its only product, bitumen. Between the town and the bitumen wells there stretches a "blasted heath," arid and pitted like the surface of the moon—an abomination of desolation compared with which the region of the Baku

<sup>1</sup> Near Felluja is the battlefield of Cunaxa, where the defeat by King Artaxerxes II. of his rebel brother Cyrus the Younger in 401 B.C. led to the march of Xenophon to the Black Sea.

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oil wells, which I had once thought to be the most forbidding spot on earth, positively teems with amenities. The atmosphere is laden with dust, and the sulphurous smells increase in intensity as one nears the wells, witches' cauldrons in very truth.

"The earth has bubbles as the water has,  
And these are of them."

An inky liquid boils up in the vicious craters, and on the surface there collects slowly a filthy scum, thick, black and wrinkled like the skin of some monstrous pachyderm—the asphalt of commerce. But throw a match or a piece of burning paper into the pool, and the spectacle becomes at once one of diabolic beauty. The flames run swiftly over the surface of the well as over a gigantic snap-dragon, now dying away, now blazing up with renewed fierceness as the geyser belches forth in black and oily bubbles its foul, combustible gases. Beware, however, of bending over the pools after the fires have burned themselves out. For then the fumes are deadly indeed, and he who inhales them is liable to lose consciousness and to fall, as has sometimes happened, into those wicked depths.

In favourable weather it is possible for a powerful motor-car to travel from Hit to Palmyra in twelve hours. But we were unfortunate. A sudden cloud-burst, by saturating the broadest of the *wadis* we had to cross, held us up for the night; and it was not until noon of the following day that we espied across the desert, standing bravely on the apex of a steep, conical hill, the Saracenic or Turkish castle which commands the oasis of Tadmor.

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### 4

Civilization, not the civilization of motor-cars and of gold-plated teeth but the civilization which built and peopled rich and flourishing cities, has receded in a remarkable manner from the Syrian desert and its Arabian borderlands. These inhospitable regions are still full of traces of epochs of prosperity, which did not necessarily begin with Roman rule nor end with the Romans' departure. Jerash, indeed, and Amman and other cities of the Decapolis, Bosra in the Hauran, Tuba and its fellow-fortresses on the extreme eastern marches of Transjordan, owe their buildings to Rome and, in the case of the Decapolis, their thought to Greece. On the other hand Petra had been made great by the Arab Nabatæans before the Romans set foot in Arabia Petræa; while the palace of M'shatta, which has much to show notwithstanding the removal of a portion of its façade to Berlin in 1904, was only brought into being by Sassanids or Arabs in the sixth or seventh century A.D.

The greatest of these ancient cities of the desert was Tadmor, better known by its Greek and Roman name Palmyra. The ancient Palmyrenes, while speaking Aramaic, were Beduin Arabs, of the same stock as are their modern successors, the inhabitants of the Tadmor of to-day. But whereas these are poor, with no resources beyond the produce of their orchards and the gifts of travellers, they were rich, for a sudden deflection of trade-routes in the second century A.D. gave to their oasis the position of entrepôt of eastern commerce which previously had been Petra's. Palmyra, like Petra, was an

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upstart, and both states, after a momentary flash of brilliance, expired as rapidly as they had arisen. But while some, at all events, of Petra's monuments—the earlier Nabataean pylon tombs, for example—owed nothing to the art of Greece and Rome, Palmyra was purely imitative, was built to the order of its prosperous and uncritical population.

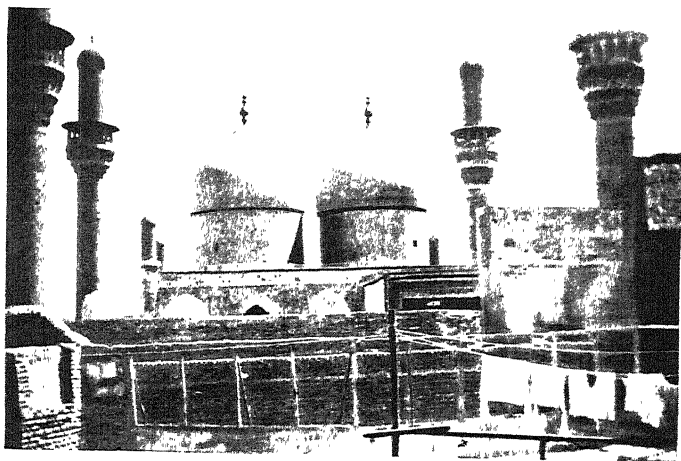
In the course of their journeys with their caravans the Palmyrenes had seen and admired the Græco-Roman cities of Syria and the Mediterranean coast, and had decided to reproduce one of these, complete in every detail, on their native sands. Money was no object to them; and, *nouveaux riches* that they were, they demanded size and lavish display in preference to elegance and good taste. The period, too, was not favourable to the latter; and thus there arose on this improbable site, rapidly, like a mushroom town of the American Far West, a costly, ponderous, sumptuous city, without grace, without variety, without inspiration. The same decoration is repeated everywhere; the columns stretch for miles in monotonous uniformity, each with its bracket designed to support the statue of some successful merchant or leader of caravans. The sepulchral towers which surround and overlook Palmyra, true “towers of silence,” if I may borrow the Parsee term, are its only Oriental feature; but even here, if the design be Arab, the style and decoration are Græco-Roman. Nevertheless, although genius is absent, there is undeniable grandeur: it was no small material and physical achievement to raise a city on so vast a scale on the unstable sands of this remote oasis. It is with its anomalous situation, coupled with the

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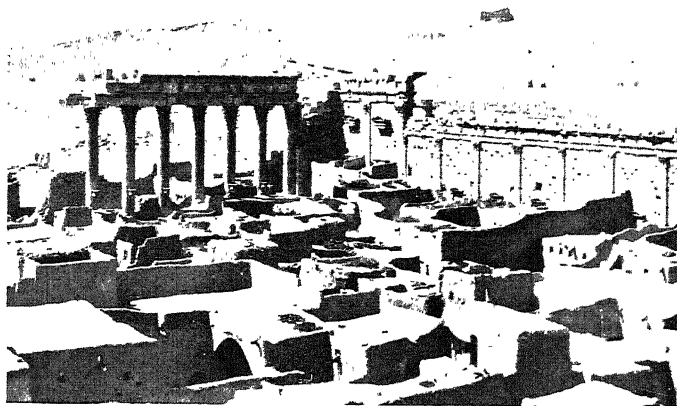
colossal size of its monuments, that Palmyra makes its greatest claim to the admiration of the visitor. Doubtless it would excite interest were it situated in the plains of western Syria or in the fertile valleys of Anatolia. Here, rising abruptly from a sandy waste that is only separated from sheer desert by a narrow girdle of figs and pomegranates, it creates an effect that at first sight is almost bewildering.

When the Romans established themselves in Syria, Palmyra became their tributary while retaining its autonomy in local affairs. Later, as its wealth increased with the elimination of Petra, it secured, under a native dynasty founded by one Odainath (Odenathus), a growing measure of independence. The defeat of the Emperor Valerian at Edessa in A.D. 260 and the feeble control exercised over the eastern provinces of the Empire by his successor Gallienus, gave to Septimius Odenathus, a descendant of the first Odainath, and to his vigorous and talented consort Zenobia the opportunity to enlarge their power. Appointed by Gallienus to be his viceroy in the East with the title of *dux Orientis*, Odenathus overran Syria, Arabia and a part of Asia Minor, theoretically in the name of the *fainéant* Emperor; and, after his assassination, his widow, as regent for her young son, extended her sway from the banks of the Nile to the Asiatic shore of Bosporus. The conquests of these early Arabs in settled, historical lands are not less astonishing in their magnitude because their effect was largely ephemeral. The Nabatæans of Petra twice included Damascus in their dominions; and even more remarkable is the fact that Zenobia and her son, Beduin Arabs from a

PLATE XXVIII



THE GOLDEN DOMES OF KADHIMEIN.



PALMYRA AND THE VILLAGE OF TADMOR

*To face page 238.*



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crossing of caravan routes, governed Egypt as Augusta and Augustus. But the ambitious queen had overreached herself. It was this assumption of the Imperial title, marking as it did the definite rejection of the Roman allegiance, that brought the Palmyrene *épopée* to an end. It decided the Emperor Aurelian to reassert the authority of Rome over the East, which his predecessors had allowed to slip from their hands; and the last act of the drama, as all the world knows, shows Zenobia, defeated at last after a career of almost unparalleled success, gracing the triumph of the victorious Cæsar. The curtain goes down on a peaceful villa at Tibur where the exiled queen, always a friend of learning, spends her last years in philosophical and religious discussions. So, twelve centuries later, did her sister in misfortune, Queen Katharine Cornaro, end her days in her villa at Asolo, a patron of art and of the scholars of the Renaissance.

As the name Petra is now lost to the Beduin of the neighbourhood of the "rose-red city," who know the place only as Wadi Musa, the Valley of Moses, so has Palmyra, to the Arabs who inhabit it, become Tadmor once again. The village of Tadmor is a collection of squalid, dirty mud houses, huddled inside the enclosing wall of the great temple of the sun-god Bel. If these puny hovels mask and conceal some of the detail, they certainly emphasize the dimensions of this formidable monument, in the best preserved portion of which, the *cella* of the temple, is housed, not inappropriately, the modern mosque. The Sheikh of the village is an artless old Bedu, a very different "Ras Tadmor"



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from the warrior who held that dignity more than sixteen hundred years ago. Yet to him, too, there clings the faint shadow of romance. In his youth a Frenchwoman of position, the relative, it is said, of some President of the Republic, was attracted, while on a visit to Palmyra, by his appearance and persuaded him to accompany her to Paris. So, emulating in the contrary sense Lady Ellenborough and Lady Hester Stanhope, whose fancy led them eastward, this son of the desert followed his Egeria to the West. But after a sojourn of ten months he could bear its gloomy clime no longer and returned, never to leave it again, to his house of mud in the temple of the sun.

## CHAPTER XII

### FROM PRESTER JOHN TO MAR SHIMUN

NEXT to the legend of the Holy Grail it is safe to say that no belief excited the interest and the imagination of mediæval Europe in greater degree than that connected with the person and dynasty of Prester John. In that vast and mysterious *terra incognita* of Farther Asia, unknown to the West until its unification under the Great Khan enabled sundry intrepid travellers to penetrate to the Courts of the princes of the House of Jenghiz, there reigned, men knew, a mighty Christian potentate, who would one day, it was hoped, join forces with the kings of the West to expel the Saracens from the Holy Land. Some of the collections of tales so popular in the Middle Ages include on the subject stories of the fantastic kind which we associate with the name of Sir John Maundeville, but the evidence of serious and cautious witnesses such as Rubruquis, Friar John di Piano Carpini and, above all, Marco Polo, stands in a different category. For our present purpose we need trouble ourselves with the fabulous accretions which mediæval credulity soon added to the basis of truth as little as with the last phase of Prester John, wherein he is identified with the Christian ruler of Abyssinia. Of more concern to us here is the story told at the Papal Court in 1145 by the Bishop of Gabala.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jebeleh on the coast of Syria, between Latakia and

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This Syrian prelate recounted how, "in the extreme orient, between Persia and Armenia," there dwelt "one John, king and priest, who was with his people a Christian, but a Nestorian." Somewhat later we find the *Sieur de Joinville* in the West, in the East the great Jacobite divine and historian *Barhebræus*, repeating a story which is very similar. And *Marco Polo* has much to say about the "great prince, the same that we call *Prester John*, him, in fact, about whose great dominion all the world talks."

And what is the foundation of this widespread belief in *Prester John*, what sediment of truth remains when the froth of legend is poured away? Why is this Christian monarch of the remote East *Presbyter*, and why *John*? In the first place it is necessary to bear in mind that the Mongols in the earlier stages of their career as world-conquerors, appalling as was the slaughter by which they achieved their conquests, were tolerant in matters of religion. Thus the two ministers to whom *Kuyuk*, the third *Khakan* and the grandson of *Jenghiz*, left the affairs of State, were Nestorians, as were his doctors, and a Nestorian chapel stood before his tent. Christianity and Islam, Buddhism and Shamanism were tolerated on an equal footing. It was not until the Empire of *Jenghiz* began to fall to pieces from sheer unwieldiness that the rulers of its component parts gravitated definitely towards Islam in the West, Buddhism in the East. Although the imagination staggers at the thought of the blood

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Tartus. It is not to be confused with *Jebeil* (*Byblos*), which is referred to in the preceding chapter.

they spilled, they did not kill *ad maiorem dei gloriam*; in questions of faith they practised the tolerance of indifference. If they showed favour to one religion more than to another in this earlier period, they did so towards Christianity. On several occasions the Mongols displayed willingness to enter into relations with the Christian West, seeing in the Frankish rulers possible allies against their principal western enemies, the Arab Khalifate, the Egyptian Mamluks and the Empire of the Seljuq Turks. Hulagu Khan, another grandson of Jenghiz and the founder in Persia of the Mongol dynasty of the Il-khans, was not a Christian, although his son Abagha married a daughter of Michael Palæologus<sup>1</sup> and some of his relatives were baptized. But Europe believed him to be one; and the Pope addressed to him a letter of congratulation on his good intentions. In pursuance of the same policy, other Mongol princes espoused western Christian wives. Toktu, Khan of the Golden Horde, married Maria, the daughter of the Byzantine Emperor Andronicus II.; and the wife of Uzbek Khan, a subsequent ruler of the Golden Horde, was a daughter of Andronicus III.

Secondly, we must remember that the western travellers who made their way to the lands of the Mongol Empire entered Asia preoccupied with thoughts of Prester John. Not unnaturally, they found more than one candidate whom some part or other of the story would fit. Certain aspects of the character applied to this, others to that Mongol chief known to be within the sphere of Nestorian

<sup>1</sup> The lady was destined for Hulagu himself, but he died before she arrived at his court.

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

influence. So we find the attribution hovering for a while over the head of the Gur Khan, the founder of the State of Qara-Kitai.<sup>1</sup> A little later Rubruquis sees Prester John in Küchlük, Khan of the Naiman tribe, who usurped the sovereignty of Qara-Kitai and married a daughter of the last Gur Khan. But the ruler who fulfils the greatest number of requirements is the Khan of the Nestorian tribe of the Kerait, a prince who received from the Kin Emperor of northern China the title of "Wang" (kinglet) and is known thereafter as the Wang Khan, corrupted by his European contemporaries to Ung Khan. For a time the Ung Khan competed with the terrible Jenghiz for the hegemony of Central Asia. He and his house were Christians; and Marco Polo at the close of the thirteenth century, Friar John of Montecorvino<sup>2</sup> and Friar Odoric early in the fourteenth, found his successors, "still Prester John," reigning in the land of "Tenduk."<sup>3</sup> To analyze the origins of the story of Prester John is beyond the purpose of this chapter.

<sup>1</sup> Qara-Kitai is the equivalent of "Black Cathay." Kitai is still the Russian name for China.

<sup>2</sup> 1247-1328. Ultimately Latin Archbishop of Peking. Not to be confused with the somewhat earlier Friar John di Piano Carpini mentioned above.

<sup>3</sup> The later history and end of the Kerait is not without interest. In the early part of the eighteenth century, now no longer Christians but Moslems, they invaded Russia under the leadership of their chief, Ayuka Khan, but were compelled to make peace with Peter the Great at Astrakhan in 1722. Unable, however, to settle down under Russian rule they decided, with a revival of the old nomad spirit, upon the drastic expedient of wholesale emigration. 70,000 families broke up their homes and wandered to China, where they were rapidly assimilated by the native population.

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Despite the cloud of doubt and confusion in which it is enveloped, we may be satisfied that the person existed, although his sacerdotal character did not. "John" may have been the name given in baptism to the Ung Khan; it may have been suggested by the resemblance between "Ung Khan" and "Yukhanan." The priestly element is more difficult to explain. But it is generally accepted that Lamaism owes its monasticism and its ritual to imitation of the practices of the early Nestorians on the part of their Buddhist neighbours; and it has been suggested that a Mongol Christian chief may well, with the known tolerance of the race, have held a place in the hierarchy of Buddhist monks in conjunction with his Christianity.

I cannot speak of Nestorian history without a reference to the most interesting of the efforts of the Mongol rulers to establish an understanding with the West, because the effort in question, made through the agency of a Nestorian ambassador, sheds light on the Nestorian Church alike at the moment of its widest expansion and at the height of its spiritual and political activities. The ruler who sent the embassy was Argon, the Il-khan of Persia, a grandson of Hulagu; and, at the time of its despatch, Argon's great-uncle, the Khakan Kublai, the patron of the Polos, was still exercising from his throne in Peking the supreme overlordship of the vast Mongol confederation founded by Kublai's grandfather Jenghiz.

The story is told in one of the most curious manuscripts<sup>1</sup> that have come down to us from the

<sup>1</sup> Translated and edited by J. B. Chabot, *Histoire de Mar Jabalaha III., Patriarche des Nestoriens, et du Moine Rabban*

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Middle Ages—one of the most curious because, true counterpart of the narratives of Marco Polo and his European contemporaries, it relates the experiences of a Mongol Christian, a native of Peking, in the course of his travels overland to the remote West. The story opens with the account of the birth, parentage and youth of two native members of the Nestorian Church in China, both Uighurs by race. The one, Mark, was born at a place called Kow-shang or Kung-chang, which is identified with Marco Polo's Caccianfu; the other, Bar-soma, in Peking, which in the days of the Mongol Empire was called Khanbaligh, "the city of the Khan," the Cambaluc of Marco Polo.

In due course the two friends resolve to enter the priesthood and to embrace the monastic life; and for some years they live together as hermits and ascetics and acquire a wide reputation for sanctity in the Chinese Church. Then Mark becomes restless. He has visions of a great destiny reserved for him in what he regards as the West, and ultimately he induces his companion to undertake with him a pilgrimage to the Holy Places. We can hardly realize nowadays how tremendous an enterprise was this journey across the breadth of Asia upon which our two poor Mongol monks from Eastern China decide to embark. Their relatives and friends oppose the project with energy, and to their persuasions are added those of the two governors of the province, sons-in-law of Kublai Khan. "Why,"

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*Cauma, Ambassadeur du Roi Argoun en Occident*, Paris, 1895. The language of the manuscript is Syriac, and there is a copy ("Oriental Manuscripts 3636") in the British Museum.

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ask these, "do you abandon our country to go into the West? Are we not at pains to bring hither monks and bishops from the West? How, then, can we allow you to depart?" But they are firm in their resolve, and are sent on their way by the princes with gifts. After many hardships they arrive, by way of Kashgar and Khorasan, in the province of Azerbaijan, where they meet the Nestorian Patriarch, Mar Denha or Dinkha. They then continue on their way to Baghdad to venerate the shrines of Mar Mari<sup>1</sup> and the Prophet Ezekiel, and those of other saints at Erbil and Mosul, Sinjar, Nisibin and Mardin. After accomplishing this preliminary pilgrimage they settle down for a while in a monastery near Baghdad, where they enjoy an interval of peace that is broken by the Patriarch, who recalls them from the joys of contemplation to a life of activities about his person. They undertake on his behalf a mission to the Il-khan Abagha, now the ruler of the lands of the Abbasid Khalifate, which his father Hulagu had overthrown; and then they endeavour to resume their journey to Jerusalem, the goal of their undertaking. But Syria is being overrun by the Mamluk Bibars, the enemy of the Mongol Khans, and our travellers make a laborious *détour* through the Armenian city of Ani and the kingdom of Georgia. Even this gallant attempt is of no avail, so they return to the Patriarch, who has now formed another plan for their future. He consecrates Mark Metropolitan of China and appoints Bar-soma to be Mark's Visitor-

<sup>1</sup> *Mar* (fem. *Mari*) is a Syriac title meaning "Lord," which is given to saints and bishops. S. Mari, the disciple of Addai, is the reputed Apostle of Persia.



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General, despite the protests of the pair against returning to the Far East with their purpose unfulfilled. The Patriarch remarks to the new Metropolitan that no bishop has hitherto borne the title of Mar Mark, and that a new name will have to be found for him by the drawing of lots. This is done, and Mark becomes Yahb-Allaha, which means "God-given" and is the Syriac equivalent of the western Theodorc. Almost immediately afterwards Mar Denha dies, and the bishops elect Mark to succeed him as Patriarch and Katholikos of the East, with the title of Yahb-Allaha III., wisely deciding that his Mongol nationality and his popularity with the Mongol Imperial House outweigh the disadvantages of his lack of theological learning and his unfamiliarity with the Syriac tongue. So Mark is now Patriarch, with his friend Bar-soma at his side, and is well treated by Abagha and, after his death and that of his unfriendly Moslem successor Ahmed, by the next Il-khan, Argon.

We now come to the most remarkable part of the narrative. Argon is anxious to contract an alliance with the Pope and the princes of Europe against the Egyptian Mamluks, and asks the Patriarch to find him a suitable envoy. Yahb-Allaha nominates Bar-soma, and the latter sets out, in the year 1287, accompanied by various dignitaries of the Patriarch's Court. Yahb-Allaha's choice affords great satisfaction to Argon, who considers that the despatch of a real Mongol Christian of high rank, the legate of the Patriarch of Eastern Christendom, provides a favourable opportunity to convert to his views the Pope and the Frankish rulers.

So Bar-soma again passes through Armenia and Georgia and by way of the Black Sea reaches Con-

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stantinople, where he pays his respects to the Emperor Andronicus II., who was connected with the Mongols, as we have seen, by the marriage of his daughter to Toktu Khan, the ruler of the Golden Horde. Thence he takes ship to Italy, sees Stromboli in eruption and from the terrace of a house in Naples witnesses a naval battle between *Irid Kharladu* (a puzzling name, which conceals the identity of the King of Naples, "il re Carlo due") and *Irid Arkun* ("il re d'Aragon"). After this introduction to European politics and the unity of western Christendom, our Nestorian and his suite proceed to Rome, where they learn that the Pope (Honorius IV.) is dead. They are, however, introduced into the presence of twelve great lords called *Kardinale*, who are assembled to elect the new Pope, and to these they explain the object of their mission as well as the Nestorian confession of faith. Then, since there is for the moment no Pope with whom he can negotiate, Bar-soma proceeds to the other States to which he is accredited, beginning with Genoa, where he sees the Holy Grail.<sup>1</sup> His next visit is to the King of France. Philip IV. orders his "emirs" to show the envoy the sights of Paris, including the University and the Abbey of S. Denis, and, as an exceptional compliment, displays to him, preserved in a casket of crystal, the Crown of Thorns.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The vase of green crystal supposed to have been used at the Last Supper. When Cæsarea in Palestine, where it was preserved, was taken by the Crusaders in 1101, it was included in the share of the booty which fell to the Genoese. It is still treasured in Genoa Cathedral under the name of the *Sacro Cattino*.

<sup>2</sup> This and other relics of the Passion were acquired by S. Louis from certain Venetian merchants, with whom they

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Now follows the part of Bar-soma's embassy which must have the greatest interest for Englishmen, namely his visit to "King *Alangitar* in *Kasonia*." The author of the manuscript, or a copyist, has here again mistaken, as is his habit, the title for the personal name; for this mysterious personage is none other than the King of "Angleterre," Edward I., then in residence in Gascony. King Edward welcomes his strange visitor with all honour and gives a favourable answer to the subject of his mission. He tells the monk that the Kings of the Franks wear the Cross on their breasts in earnest of their determination to recover the Holy Land; and he receives the Holy Communion at the hands of this Nestorian of Peking. When Bar-soma, in accordance with his custom (for he is the pious pilgrim as much as the ambassador), makes inquiry about the principal relics and other wonders of the land, Edward replies: "There is nothing more admirable than what we have seen, namely that in the land of the Franks there are no two confessions, but only one faith in our Lord, which all Christians profess." One wonders to what extent the naval engagement of which he was a witness at Naples tended to discount, in the envoy's mind, the practical value of this uniformity.<sup>1</sup>

Our monk now returns to Rome, to find a Pope in the person of Nicholas IV. Remaining in Rome

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had been pawned by Baldwin II., Latin Emperor of Constantinople. It was for their accommodation that the Sainte Chapelle was built.

<sup>1</sup> In 1303 Edward despatched, by a subsequent envoy, a letter (which has been preserved) to Mar Yahb-Allaha, apologizing for his delay in taking part in the Crusade.

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sufficiently long to be present at the ceremonies of Holy Week and Easter, 1288, and to receive, despite his Nestorianism, the sacrament from Nicholas, Bar-soma journeys home with letters and presents for the Khan and the Patriarch and with relics for the latter, and is welcomed by them with great rejoicings. The manuscript next proceeds to deal at some length with the relations of Mar Yahb-Allaha and his flock with their Mongol rulers and their Moslem neighbours. It closes with the death of the Patriarch in 1317 after a career which is, in its way, unparalleled in history, a career which brought an obscure Mongol monk from his Chinese birthplace to the rule of the Christian East. Twenty-five Metropolitans and some two hundred and thirty bishops acknowledged his authority; his jurisdiction extended from Ceylon to Siberia, from Socotra to Samarkand, from Cyprus to where

“In Xanadu did Kubla Khan  
A stately pleasure-dome decree.”

*Felix opportunitate mortis*, he died when his Church was at the height of its glory. Within a century of his death the Nestorians, their flourishing missions utterly wiped out, had disappeared from China and from the vast territories of Central Asia, and had become a shattered remnant in the mountains of Kurdistan.

The cataclysm which arrested the brilliant progress of Christianity in the Far and Middle East, which not only annihilated the missions of the Nestorians but left a ghastly void on the surface of Asia, was the invasion of that scourge of God, “Tamerlane,” the lame Timur. Hulagu, terribly

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destructive as he was, yet set up in Persia an organized and, on the whole, a civilized state. But Timur, a rebel against the House of Jenghiz, although his descendants established the Mogul (Mongol) Empire in India, was nothing but a devastator, a devastator on an appalling scale. It was a long time before the grass grew again where he and his hordes had passed; "who can reckon the tribute they have taken, the cities they have sacked, the blood they have spilled?"

After the Abbasid Khalifate and its capital Baghdad fell at the hands of Hulagu, the Nestorian Patriarchs moved northward and divided their time between Mosul and Hulagu's capital in Persian Azerbaijan, Maragha or Margha, a town situated to the east of Lake Urumiah, about seventy miles south of Tabriz. Maragha was the favourite residence of Mar Yahb-Allaha III. and his immediate successors; but, after the wholesale slaughter perpetrated by Timur, the surviving Nestorians fled for safety to the highlands of Kurdistan. When the storm had subsided and the modern states of Persia and Turkey had begun to rise from the chaos of the Mongols' passage, the Nestorian remnant was able to take stock of its position and to contemplate its desolation. Rarely can so short a period of years have witnessed so drastic a change in the fortunes of a people; what had been a mighty blaze was now a dimly flickering spark. Gone were the bishoprics and the faithful of China, of Siberia, of Turkestan, of eastern Persia; cut off from all contact with the parent Church were the communities of Malabar. In Syria and Iraq proper the situation was but little better: the Church of the East,

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which had well merited its name, was now confined to the plains and mountains of northern Mesopotamia. The mere shadow of its former self, almost exterminated and without resources, it was even compelled to abandon its holdings in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre; of its chapels and priests in the central shrine of Christendom we hear no more after the sixteenth century. The same century saw the beginnings of a new series of losses. The Nestorians of the city and plain of Mosul began to enter into communion with Pope Julius III. and were formed by Rome into a separate Uniate Church, to which was given the name Chaldæan. The ancient stock was now confined to the remote fastnesses of the Hakkari Mountains; and at Qudshanes, in one of their wildest valleys, the Patriarch Mar Shimun XIII. (1662-1700) established the Patriarchal residence. In 1843 and 1845 savage massacres of Nestorians were carried out by the Kurdish Mir of Bohtan, Bedr Khan Beg, and his followers; and so reduced was the little flock thereafter that, but for the timely aid given since 1886 by the "Archbishop of Canterbury's Assyrian Mission," this most interesting survival might well have disappeared altogether.

The last massacre of Bedr Khan Beg is noteworthy for two reasons. First, it left so indelible an impression on the minds of the survivors that the Assyrians, in ordinary parlance, still date their years from 1845. Secondly, the Kurds, in ravaging Qudshanes and in pillaging its church, destroyed one of the greatest treasures of the House of Mar Shimun, the *firman* cherished by a long line of Patriarchs as having been granted to the Church of

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the East by the Prophet Mohammed, together with a knife of his giving. "Once in the year," says Surma Khanum d'Beit Mar Shimun, the aunt of the present Patriarch, in her interesting little book on the customs of her people,<sup>1</sup> "a selected Mollah of Julamerk used to come up and read the document in the public assembly. Farther, the strictest Moslems, who will not as a rule eat anything that has been slaughtered by a Christian, will eat without hesitation of any animal slaughtered by a member of the Patriarchal family."

It was at the time of the defections to the Chaldeans that those who remained true to the old Church made their Patriarchate hereditary in the House of Mar Shimun, the Syriac for "Lord Simon." Since then every Patriarch has assumed, on his succession, the name Shimun; and the dignity which, owing to the looseness of Turkish control in this inaccessible region, was not only spiritual but temporal, has passed from uncle to nephew or brother to brother (the Patriarchs and Bishops are celibate and life-long abstainers from meat) like the Prince-Bishopric of Montenegro under the Vladikas. Bishoprics, too, have tended to become vested in certain families. Reduced to a handful of mountaineers, the Assyrians felt that only the continuity secured by the hereditary principle would enable them to hold their own; that they could not afford to be weakened by the internal conflicts inseparable in the circumstances, as they knew well, from a system of free election. They do not defend this practice—which is known

<sup>1</sup> *Assyrian Church Customs and the Murder of Mar Shimun*, The Faith Press, London, 1920.

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as that of the *natar kursiya*, "the Holder of the Chair"—on the ground that it is canonical, for they admit that it is not. But they claim that it is the only one that could save from extinction a small remnant such as theirs, struggling for its very existence in hostile surroundings. The life the Assyrians lived on the borderlands of Turkey and Persia from this time onwards until the Great War has been likened to that of the Highlanders of Scotland under the Stuart kings. It was a feudal, tribal life of constant fighting, each clan led by its own *malik*, each *malik* following the anointed Patriarch and feudal lord of the whole nation. Some clans, exempt from taxation (because the tax-collector could not get at them) and only paying tribute through their Patriarch, enjoyed the higher status of *ashiret*<sup>1</sup>; others, more easily accessible to their foes, were *rayahs* and subject both to Turk and to Kurd. To *ashiret* as well as to *rayah* the Kurd was the enemy, ever ready to raid and to plunder, more numerous and better armed than the Christian. But let it not be supposed that the Assyrian was content to turn the other cheek. This hardy mountain-people is a Church militant in the most literal sense of the term; and that it gave as good as it received may be inferred from the circumstance that, if Kurds address their dogs in Syriac, the Assyrians speak to theirs in Kurdish.

If the people of Mar Shimun have lost the proud position they held in the past, they have not lost their capacity for producing martyrs. Insufficiently realized is the colossal risk that was taken by "our smallest ally" when, hazarding its all, it threw its

<sup>1</sup> Lit. tribe, clan.



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lot in with the Entente. The Assyrians' part in the Great War was but a "side-show" in that vast drama, but they staked their very existence as a people on what they believed to be right. The story of their participation in the struggle has been told well elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> and I need do no more than give its briefest outlines. In the spring of 1915 the nation took to arms in response to an appeal for co-operation from the Russians, then advancing on Van, although the Turks had threatened the Patriarch, Mar Benjamin Shimun, who was then only twenty-four years of age, that they would kill his younger brother Hormizd, who happened to be in Constantinople for his education, if his people did not keep quiet. Mar Shimun's answer was as follows: "My people are my sons, and they are many. Hormizd my brother is but one. Let him therefore give his life for the nation." In making this reply the Patriarch knew well that the threat was no empty one: Hormizd was put to death, a sacrifice on the altar of loyalty.

Although forced out of its mountains by Kurds and Turks before the end of the year, the Assyrian people was able, by a masterly retreat, to reach safety in the plain of Urumiah. Here, for about twenty months, it contrived to hold its own in the welter of confusion that reigned in this junction of the three Empires—Persian, Russian and Turkish; but the Russian *débâcle* in the autumn of 1917 meant inevitable disaster. In February, 1918, the gallant

<sup>1</sup> In the plain, unvarnished tale of Surma Khanum, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-114; and in Wigram, *Our Smallest Ally*, and Austin, *The Baqubah Refugee Camp*, both published by the Faith Press, London, 1920.

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young Patriarch, who had proved himself a true leader of his people, was treacherously murdered by a Kurdish leader named Simco Agha, who was ostensibly his ally; by November of the same year those who remained of the nation had to seek shelter, after a terrible march, in the camp of refuge which the British army established for them at Baquba in Iraq.

My first personal experience of the Assyrians was gained in Tiflis in 1920, when I had charge of the British Political Mission to the three Transcaucasian Republics. In Tiflis had taken sanctuary, as far back as 1915, some thousands of the Nestorians who dwelt on the Persian side of the Turco-Persian frontier and had followed the Russians after their evacuation of Urumiah in the early days of that year. Unable thereafter, owing to the Turkish advance in the Caucasus, to rejoin their compatriots and to take a part in their subsequent adventures, these people perforce remained in Georgia, cut off from their main body and in dire financial distress. Most of the men were masons by trade, but conditions were then too unstable, even in Georgia, to make much building possible. I was enabled by the generosity of the Lord Mayor's Fund for the Armenians to dole out periodical sums of money to the most destitute of these families; and I was pleased to recognize some of my acquaintances of those days at the *divan* of Mar Shimun in Mosul, four years afterwards.

The Patriarch's *divan* at Qudshanes before the war must have been an interesting gathering. It was regularly frequented by all who had business with Mar Shimun, as well as by visitors; and it

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was here, after the ceremonial drinking of coffee, that the *maliks* and lesser notables brought forward such matters as required the Patriarch's decision and that the affairs of the nation were conducted. In Mosul the receptions of the Patriarch *en exil* were necessarily of a more restricted character but were attended, none the less, by some notable personalities. When I paid my first visit to Mar Shimun there were present, beside his aunt Surma Khanum, the Metropolitan of Shemsdinan, Mar Yusuf, and the Patriarch's father, David, who was one of the leaders in the Assyrian campaigns during the war and is now the senior Assyrian officer of the "levies." Another visitor was Mar Sergis, the fighting Bishop of Jilu and Baz, who had helped to relieve Amadia from Turcophil Kurds in 1922 and had come into Mosul to receive from the Government a reward for the services he rendered on that occasion. A portly, jolly-looking gentleman with a red face, a black beard and the unusual distinction of having become a Bishop at the age of three, he was dressed in reefer and trousers of coarse blue serge and, but for his turban, would have suggested a seafaring character in the works of W. W. Jacobs. At the end of the room, smoking a *chibug*, sat an aged priest of the old school, whose hair hung down in pig-tails below a white conical felt hat, precisely resembling the *petasus* of Hermes. At the back stood in a row several picturesque retainers arrayed in bandoliers, a bonnet of the type seen on ancient Assyrian bas-reliefs and wide bell-shaped trousers of green and purple-striped cotton.

A word may be said in passing of the cathedral of the Bishop of Jilu, the famous Church of Mar

PLATE XXIX



MAR SHIMUN XXI. WITH SURMA KHANUM  
AND THE METROPOLITAN OF  
SHEMSDINAN.



THE OFFICIAL SEAL OF MAR SHIMUN.

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Zeia. Until it was sacked in the course of the Great War this church, although of extreme antiquity, had never been plundered, and it was the nearest approach to a museum to be found in the territory of the Nestorians. The men of Jilu have always been wanderers on the face of the earth, frequently (in more recent times) as seekers of contributions from abroad in relief of Nestorians in general and of themselves in particular; and they have been accustomed to enrich their church, after a safe return, with *ex voto* offerings of every kind. The practice evidently dates back to the earliest periods of Nestorian history, for among the rarest treasures of the church were the porcelain jars (now smashed, alas, by vandal Kurds) brought back from China by the Nestorian missionaries of the seventh and eighth centuries. The talisman that had protected the shrine was an Arabic *firman* on a piece of linen, supposed to have been written by the Prophet himself on his own napkin. Potent the charm must certainly have been, for the man who despoiled the church, the eldest son of Simco Agha, did not long survive this act of brutal and wanton destruction. "As he stood at the church door superintending the removal of the plunder, a shot fired at extreme range took him in the head, and he fell in front of the church that he was desecrating."<sup>1</sup>

Even now the future of the Assyrians is not assured. Much depends on the final settlement with Turkey, for most of their mountain-valleys, including the Patriarchal seat of Qudshanes, lie to the north of the present provisional frontier of Iraq. In Mosul they are still refugees, although it has

<sup>1</sup> Wigram, *Our Smallest Ally*, p. 21.

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been found possible to settle some of them in empty villages and to employ others in the Assyrian "levies." It was during the Baquba period that the brother and successor of Benjamin, Mar Polus (Paul) Shimun, died of consumption, and that his young nephew Ishai (Jesse), then a child of twelve, was consecrated as Mar Shimun XXI. Guided by that able lady, Surma Khanum, who pleaded the Assyrian cause at the Peace Conference, and by Mar Yusuf, the Metropolitan of Shemsdinan, the boy-Patriarch is growing up to the realization of his strange responsibilities in a period of heavy anxieties for his decimated flock. From his aunt he received a grounding in English, which is standing him in good stead now that he is completing his education in England; and both he and his people long for a period of stability under the Iraq Government and the British connexion. And those to whose imagination this little heir to a mighty tradition makes appeal must hope that a Mar Shimun may reign once more in his ancestral home by the banks of the Zab, one of the rivers of Paradise, and may yet again date his encyclicals according to the ancient form: "From my cell on the River of the Garden of Eden."

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE WORSHIPPERS OF SATAN

IN the Jebel Sinjar to the west of Mosul and in the district of the Sheikhan to the north-east of it there dwell the peculiar people known variously to the world at large as Yezidis and Devil-worshippers. To all appearance of Kurdish stock and speaking a Kurdish dialect, their own name for themselves is "Dasnayi"; the meaning of the term Yezidi, applied to them by their neighbours, is uncertain. The Shiah Moslems, by way of adding to the odium which their beliefs have brought upon the Yezidis, like to ascribe their foundation to Yezid ibn Muawiya, the murderer of the Shiah hero Husein; but their origin is infinitely more remote than the times of the fourth Khalif and his luckless sons.

More convincing is the derivation from Yazdan, which is a Persian name of the Supreme Being; for the Almighty enjoys among the Yezidis a remote and abstract supremacy, although it is in truth little more than a *succès d'estime*. Their more serious attention is bestowed upon him whom we denominate, when we wish to be polite, the Fallen Angel, but whom they regard as invested by the Lord of All with full authority over this world below. Hence, although it may be difficult to love him, the Devil is a power to be propitiated, to be treated with all respect; hence their terror lest anyone



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should pronounce in their hearing the accursed word *Sheitan*. For this is the opprobrious name bestowed on the subject of their devotions by those who, in their ignorance, regard him as the spirit of evil, working in opposition to the Almighty; whereas all Yezidis know him for a supernatural potentate of the first magnitude, who has received for his activities a Divine *carte blanche*.

Hence, too, this ubiquitous if not precisely benevolent power is personified in a fashion very different from that obtaining among those who mistake him for Beelzebub. No cloven hoofs and forked tail, no horns and luminous eyes, figure in the Yezidi iconography. It is as the regal, the divine peacock, as Melek Taus, the Peacock Angel or King, that Satan is visualized by his fearful but faithful followers. It is, indeed, not impossible that Melek Taus was once Melek Θεός, "the Lord God,"<sup>1</sup> and was originally the attribute of the Almighty; that the title was snatched from the feeble hands of Yazdan by the celestial Mayor of the Palace and conferred, with an altered meaning, upon himself. This theory does, at all events, advance matters somewhat; for the obvious relationship between *taus*, the Persian word for a peacock, and its Greek equivalent, *ταῦς*, does not serve to explain how the peacock, the beautiful emblem of immortality of the early Christians in the catacombs of Rome, has become among the Yezidis the personification of the devil. Another theory, reading Taus as the Arabic *tas*, translates "the bright Angel"; a third sees in Taus none

<sup>1</sup> For this theory cf. Nau, *Recueil de Textes et de Documents sur les Yezidis*, pp. 16, 114.

## THE WORSHIPPERS OF SATAN

other than Tammuz, of whom there is some mention, as Adonis, in Chapter XI. Whatever be the true explanation of this vexed problem, the bronze peacock, Melek Taus, is the *sanjaq*, the banner, the Palladium of the Yezidi people, the one object of their ritual never shown to those outside the fold. There are seven images of the sacred bird, one of which remains permanently at the central shrine of Sheikh Adi. The others are carried periodically through the several Yezidi districts to stimulate the piety and the alms-giving of the faithful.

This, then, is the fundamental article of the Yezidi belief, the worship of the Peacock Angel, but it is by no means the only one. The recognition of the principles of good and evil which it perpetuates is derived in all likelihood from the Persian dualists; from Persia, too, the Yezidis may have drawn their cult of the sun, for Urumiah, the birthplace of Zoroaster, is very near to the lands of the "Dasnayi." On the other hand their sun-worship may be much older, for they adore him at his rising and setting and kiss the spot on which his ray first rests; and on great festivals they sacrifice white oxen at his shrine. Now we know that the Assyrians dedicated bulls to the sun; and what is more likely than that this strange people, whose origin and beliefs point to a remote antiquity, should be a remnant of the race which once ruled in this very region? Another circumstance which lends support to this theory is the extreme hairiness of the Yezidis. The men, almost without exception, have beards abnormally long and curly, and their hair is as coarse and thick as that of the hairy Ainus. When we consider how prominent a part is played

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

by the beard in Assyrian sculpture, it is impossible not to be struck by this curious parallel.

Nothing if not broad-minded, the Yezidis regard as inspired the Old and New Testaments and the Qoran. They accept the divinity of Christ but believe that His reign will not come until that of the Devil is over, and that the latter has another 4,000 years to run. The language of their prayers is Arabic although they do not understand it; and they assert that the water of the sacred spring at Sheikh Adi is miraculously derived from the well Zemzem at Mecca. They circumcize with the Moslems (although this may be a measure of self-protection), they baptize with the Christians, they abstain with the Jews from unlawful foods, they abhor with the Mandæans the colour blue. Moses, Mani, Melek Isa (Jesus), Mohammed and even the Imâm Mahdi combine with Melck Taus to produce a medley of undigested and half-understood tenets unequalled in any other sect. That no teacher has come forward to blend these ill assorted beliefs into a somewhat more congruous whole is probably due to the ignorance which is almost an article of faith among them. Before the War the arts of reading and writing were confined by an old tradition to a single family; and when, after the Armistice, the British Administration determined to open a school in the Jebel Sinjar, many obstacles were encountered. The Arabic letter representing the sound *sh*, and words rhyming with *sheitan*, had first to be eliminated from the text-books; and *shatt*, the usual Mesopotamian word for river, had to be replaced by the synonym *nahr*. The school, opened in the face of much opposition, did not survive for long.

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After a few weeks four pupils were drowned while fording a river swollen by the rains, whereupon the Yezidis regarded their aversion from learning as divinely (or infernally) vindicated.

The forbidden foods of the Yezidis are peculiar. They include the cock, owing to his supposed resemblance to the peacock; they include lettuce, beans and pumpkins; they also include fish, as a delicate compliment to Jonah, whose influence, apparently universal in these parts, extends even to the "Dasnayi." The flesh of the gazelle may not be eaten, because the eyes of the gazelle resemble those of Sheikh Adi. Although, as we have seen, letters are not encouraged among them, the Yezidis possess certain sacred writings, the principal ones being the "Book of Revelation" (*Kitab al-Jalweh*) and the later "Black Book" (*Kitab al-aswad*). The *Kitab al-Jalweh* is a sort of proclamation setting forth his might and powers, addressed by Satan to his faithful followers. It begins with the words: "I was, I am and I shall be unto the end of time, ruling over all creatures and ordering the affairs and deeds of those who are under my sway"; and it ends by enjoining on his people the need for secrecy with regard to his teachings. The "Black Book" is a fantastic account of the Creation, and of the origin of the Yezidis.<sup>1</sup> The "Dasnayi,"

<sup>1</sup> These books, together with other original documents concerning the religious practices of the Yezidis, are translated in Nau, *op. cit.*, and Stevens, *By Tigris and Euphrates*. Père Anastase Marie of Baghdad has published (in *Anthropos*, vol. vi., 1911) text and translation of the "Black Book"; Parry gives translations of the *Kitab al-Jalweh* and of an Arabic manuscript history of the Yezidis. Badger and Nau give translations of the "Poem of Sheikh Adi," the only one of

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shrouding these works in mystery, have failed to qualify for the favourable treatment accorded by Moslems to the "People of the Book." Not even the catholicity of their beliefs has saved them from unpopularity and even persecution. Layard gives, in his *Nineveh and its Remains*, a graphic account of how they were decimated by the Kurdish Beg of Rowanduz, who pursued those of the Sheikhan to Mosul and massacred the wretched fugitives on the hill of Qoyunjik within full view of the exulting Moslawis. Soon afterwards came the turn of the Sinjar; and there were massacres of Yezidis in 1892 and during the Great War. There cannot now be more, at the outside, than 50,000 survivors, including the Yezidis in Transcaucasia, of a race which a hundred years ago mustered well over a quarter of a million. The steadfastness of the Yezidi under persecution is the more remarkable in that Melek Taus seems an uninspiring deity for whom to die. His cult rests on a basis of fear and expediency from which love is wholly absent, yet scarcely ever have his followers been known to abjure, even when faced with torture and death, their singularly negative creed. If the Devil's hope of redemption lies in the number of his martyrs, the Yezidis' faith in him may yet be justified!

The Yezidi is a gentle being whose sufferings have left their mark in his cowed and melancholy demeanour. His chief enemy is the Turk; but

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their books which the Yezidis show willingly. Mgr. Giamil has published in the original East Syriac, with an Italian translation, an account of the Yezidi beliefs compiled, in the form of question and answer, by a Chaldean priest.

## THE WORSHIPPERS OF SATAN

to the Christian minorities, especially to the Nestorians, he is drawn by the bond of a common oppression. It must be accounted unto the Yezidis for righteousness that during the War, albeit themselves heavily oppressed, they gave shelter to hundreds of Armenian refugees who had managed to crawl from Deir ez-Zor to the Jebel Sinjar in the course of the great Armenian massacres, and that they stoutly refused to surrender them despite the persuasions and threats of the Turks.

The Yezidi Mecca is the shrine of Sheikh Adi, called after two persons of the same name, the one a Sufi saint of the twelfth century, the other a Kurdish gardener of the thirteenth, who appear to have been blended in the course of time into one nebulous identity. The Sufi Adi was a scion of the Omayyad dynasty, a Moslem whose precise rôle *dans cette galère* seems a little obscure. But a Syriac manuscript written in 1452,<sup>1</sup> which sees in the Yezidi Sheikh not the Arab mystic but the Kurdish gardener, is a little more precise. According to this account the shrine, which now bears his name, was a Nestorian monastery, of which Adi was the steward until he and his sons, having espoused Mongol wives, turned against their employers and reversed their respective functions. At first they contented themselves with reducing the holy men to the position of shepherds of their own flocks, but ultimately they murdered them and seized the convent. It is true that the author of this manuscript is a Nestorian monk, presumably with a bias towards a Nestorian origin of the property; but it establishes the tradition current on

<sup>1</sup> Published by Nau, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-8, 31-77.

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the subject only two centuries after the second Adi's death.

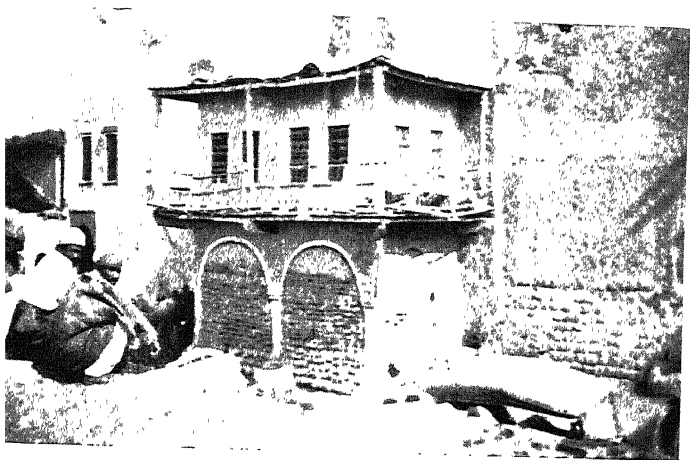
Before visiting Sheikh Adi we stayed for a day and a night with Said Beg, the hereditary Mir of the Yezidis, in his castle at Ba Idri in the Sheikhan. Ba Idri, distant a few miles from Al Qosh, is an oriental version of the true feudal stronghold of the Middle Ages. It stands assertively on the top of a small plateau or hill, while the houses of the village, each one surmounted by its stork's nest, crouch obediently at the bottom, some hundreds of feet below. The relative positions of castle and village symbolize not inaccurately the relations which exist between the Mir and his people.

Over the Yezidis the Mir exercises an absolute and autocratic sway. The best lands, the handsomest women are his without question, and he is supported by an annual due levied in money and kind upon all his subjects. So, while they are poor, he is tolerably rich, and is the proud possessor of five American motor-cars. Nevertheless, his position has its drawbacks, for rarely does a Mir of the Yezidis die in his bed. Said Beg's great-grandfather, Ali Beg, was killed by the aforementioned Rowanduz Kurds; his father, another Ali Beg, was shot by his mother's paramour, with the connivance, it is said, of the lady. This was the Ali Beg to whom Layard stood godfather, not without qualms as to the exact measure of responsibility which a Christian was assuming in sponsoring a devil-worshipping baby. Nor is Said Beg likely to make old bones, for he loves to look upon the wine when it is red and, even more, upon the arrack when it is white. Yet a certain

PLATE XXX



THE MIR OF THE YEZIDIS.



BA IDRI: COURT AND HAREMLIK.

*To face page 268.*





## THE WORSHIPPERS OF SATAN

charm of manner never leaves him altogether, and intoxication seems but to heighten his natural melancholy.

Said Beg is a personage of remarkable appearance, tall and thin, with slim, delicate hands and a waving black beard gradually tapering to a point. He looks older than he is, and a slight cast in his mournful eyes gives him a faintly sinister look. He was clad, during our visit, in the finest black broadcloth, his dress consisting of full, baggy breeches embroidered with black silk and a black zouave jacket similarly embroidered. On his head he wore a black *aghal* over a white silk *keffiyeh*. Black top boots, lacing to just below the knee, completed his costume, the general effect of which was that of a Mephisto of the Russian ballet. No Bakst could have designed a more suitable outfit for the Lord of the votaries of Satan, nor could nature have endowed him with a more appropriate cast of countenance. That formidable dowager, his mother, who plainly despises her weakling son, was also at the castle; and we visited this grim, handsome, upstanding woman in a lofty, smoke-blackened, rafted hall in the women's apartments, where beside a blazing open fire she was holding her court.

At night, in the *divan-khané*, our hosts provided for us the best cooked native dinner I have ever, in a fairly wide experience, eaten in the East. All the dishes were oriental and were served on copper trays, unaccompanied by knives, forks or spoons; the flat round bread of the country took the place of these. Generally eastern viands, many of which might otherwise be palatable, are spoiled—for me,

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

at all events—by being cooked in sheep's tail fat or in the equally horrible *samn  *, a form of clarified butter resembling the Indian *ghi*. But here, in this fastness of devil-worshippers on the marches of Kurdistan, was set before us a meal with which not the most fastidious western palate could have found a fault. Its merits were enhanced by the circumstance that for picturesque interest the *mise-en-sc  ne* could not have been bettered; and, after the dishes had been cleared away, the Mir's gloriously appavelled bodyguard, Telu and Jindi, the former a Nestorian, the latter a Yezidi, handed round a *chibug* filled with the pungent tobacco of the country, the mouthpiece a singularly noble piece of dark brown amber.

On the following day, accompanied by the Beg's retainers, we rode over the hills to Sheikh Adi, a journey of three hours on horseback from Ba Idri. Soon we encountered a number of wayside shrines with the tapering fluted cones or spires (they can hardly be called domes), which are characteristic of Yezidi architecture. Beside each shrine there was generally a sacred tree enclosed by a wall; for the Yezidis are nature-worshippers, and trees and water, stars and the moon compete with the sun and the Devil for their veneration. Presently we turned sharply from the valley we had been following into another valley that runs into it at right angles. In a few minutes we crossed a stream by a small stone bridge and, as we did so, our Yezidi companions reverently removed their shoes. For we were now in sanctuary, in the *Haram* of the Yezidi holy place, not to be trodden by the faithful save with bare feet, in a region where no wild animal may be killed,

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no vegetation cut, no water polluted. It is a little paradise, this valley, of luxuriant groves and running water, of olives and pistachios, walnuts and figs, and silvery poplars beside the stream. The tender green of early spring was around us, and at our feet hyacinths and other wild flowers grew in abundance; the sides of the valley were white with hawthorn and pink with almond-blossom. The shrine itself lies almost entirely hidden in a bower of giant mulberry trees, and a pergola of these shades with its foliage the court in front of the temple.

But amid all this sylvan and vernal loveliness is suddenly struck another note. Up the wall of the temple, to the side of the door, there climbs, evil and sinister, a shiny black serpent. He is only cut in stone, it is true, and his colour is merely black-lead; but he comes as an abrupt reminder that here, despite the innocent charm of spring, the spirit of Apollyon broods. Other devices, such as lions, combs and hatchets, are carved in low relief on the façade, and inscriptions in Syriac and Arabic, some of them upside down, are let into the walls at various places around the court.

The custodian of Sheikh Adi, a cousin of Said Beg, welcomed us at the porch of the temple but, before conducting us into the *arcana*, insisted that we should eat. Cushions and felt mats were placed for us against the temple façade, and black-shirted *fakirs* (an order of the Yezidi hierarchy<sup>1</sup>)

<sup>1</sup> The *Kitab al-Jalweh* divides the Yezidi hierarchy into seven grades, which include *pirs*, *sheikhs*, *quchaqs* ("to whom is assigned the service of the cymbals, and celebrations, and song") and *qawals* ("to whom is delegated the duty of

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hurried backwards and forwards with copper trays laden with eggs, pilav, hens and a sweet called *baqlawa*.<sup>1</sup> Then we went inside, removing our shoes at our hosts' request and placing, as they did, a small coin on the threshold.

As we entered, one of our escort, a Nestorian almost enveloped in bandoliers, whispered to me: "*Effendim*, this was once a church of ours, like Nebi Yunus at Ninweh."<sup>2</sup> Probably he was right, for the building bears a general resemblance to the early Christian churches of these parts, and the account of the fifteenth century Nestorian monk to which allusion has been made is likely to rest on some foundation. The interior consists of barrel-vaulted twin naves and is entirely unlighted. In a

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shrouding the dead and chanting religious litanies"). The *fakirs*, whose dress of black shirt, black turban, and white cotton drawers is supposed to have been that of Sheikh Adi himself, are the attendants at the sacred shrines, and it is their duty to dance at religious ceremonies. Most of these grades, if not all, are hereditary.

<sup>1</sup> *Baqlawa*, a rather sticky sweetmeat made of pastry and honey, is a very favourite dish in the Near and Middle East, as the following story will show. A Turkish Grand Vizier once gave a dinner in Constantinople to a certain Ambassador. The dinner was ample and, by the time that the *plat doux* (it was *baqlawa*) had arrived, the Ambassador could eat no more. "Supposing," asked the Grand Vizier, who noticed that his guest had passed the dish, "that you were in a very crowded apartment and that your king wanted to enter, what would you do?" "I would press against the others," said the Ambassador, "and make room for him somehow." "That is exactly what you must do," retorted the Grand Vizier, "for the *baqlawa*, who is the king of sweets."

<sup>2</sup> The mosque (originally a Nestorian church) containing the alleged tomb of Jonah and surmounting the site of Esarhaddon's palace at Nineveh.

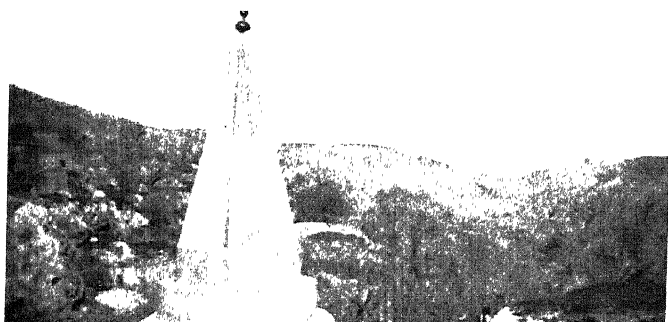
PLATE XXXI



TEMPLE COURT.



THE SERPENT.





## THE WORSHIPPERS OF SATAN

corner of the southern nave there rises a spring of beautifully clear water, the sacred spring of Zemzem, while from the middle of the northern nave a door leads into the Holy of Holies, a square chamber surmounted by the principal spire of Sheikh Adi. There is nothing in this room that in any way resembles an altar; its only contents are two draped wooden chests, one of them presumably the repository of the bronze peacock. More mysterious is the adjoining chamber, where is stored the olive oil used at the shrine. Ranged along the walls are rows upon rows of large earthenware jars, which looked, by the flickering light of our small tapers, as if they concealed the forty thieves.

There is no village at Sheikh Adi, but around and above the temple are hundreds of buildings, large and small, devoted to a variety of purposes. There are the dwellings of the custodian and his attendant *fakirs*, and rest-houses for the pilgrims who repair thither at the two great feasts of the Yezidi year. I asked one of our Yezidi attendants if Sheikh Adi was not liable to be plundered, between the pilgrimages, by the Kurds, whose villages lie all around the valley.

"No," said he; "the Kurds dare not set foot within our sanctuary. They fear the power of Melek Taus."

Minor shrines and oratories of all sizes and shapes, some of them set apart for pilgrims of particular localities, dot the valley on either side of the glen, and a little way up the southern slope rises the fluted spire of Sheikh Shems ed-Dîn, the sun. From the roof of this lesser temple, where the white oxen



## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

are sacrificed to the tutelary god, we obtained a good view of the precincts, embowered in greenery and blossom. And at night, when every dome and eminence and grove and spire is illumined by flares of bitumen (for no lamps are allowed at Sheikh Adi, and the wicks for the flares are spun at the shrine), the effect is beautiful in the extreme. It seemed wrong that all this loveliness and light should be lavished on the Prince of Darkness; yet one could not but admit, if his shrine be any criterion, that he is a gentleman, and a gentleman of taste.

## CHAPTER XIV

### A RETROSPECT: 1904-34

It was early in 1904 that I first set foot in Turkey. More than three years afterwards, from the autumn of 1907 to the late spring of 1908, I was again travelling in various parts of the Levant, mainly on horseback, from Parnassus in the west to Mesopotamia in the east, from Palestine in the south to Mount Athos in the north. In 1911 I returned to the Near East, on this occasion in an official capacity, and most of my service since then has lain in lands embraced within the old Ottoman, Russian and Persian Empires: in several Mediterranean islands, on both sides of the Bosphorus, at both ends of the Black Sea. The thirty years that have elapsed since my first journey have been heavy with political and social change everywhere, but in few parts of the world heavier than in the Levant, which from being static has become exceedingly dynamic. How rapid have been these changes the following retrospect will endeavour briefly to suggest.

Life in Constantinople, when I first knew it in 1904, was darkened by the fog of suspicion entertained by the Sultan and the Porte against the Christian Powers and the Sultan's Christian subjects, the *rayahs*. And not only against these. No Minister felt secure in the service of his Padishah,

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

no official of importance but was under close observation by the spies set on him by the morbidly distrustful monarch and was heavily out of pocket by having to bribe these spies into harmlessness or by having to maintain a staff of counter-spies. This was the period of the exploitation of the Turk by western concessionnaires and of the dazzling rather than sound finance of European banks in Turkey not inaptly known as "Bosphorescence." It was the period when the dynamos sought to be imported by the concessionnaires were regarded with extreme disfavour by the Ottoman Customs, not only because they tended to be confused with dynamite but also on their own demerits as producing revolutions more rapidly than any other known agency. It was the time when, by the censor's order, a French-Turkish and Turkish-French dictionary compiled by a distinguished Moslem *savant* had to omit the words "conspiracy" and "deposition"; when the only meaning it was allowed to give to the word "revolution" referred to the movements of the solar bodies; when Bibles imported into Turkey were delivered with the name "Armenia" carefully blocked out. It was the time when text-books on chemistry were liable to be confiscated because they contained, and not only contained but repeated, the subversive formula  $H_2O$ ,  $H_2$  obviously referring to Sultan Hamid II. and the O indicating that his Majesty equalled zero. It was the time when a French theatrical company on tour in Constantinople could undergo the following trying experience. The company proposed to perform an historical play entitled "Richelieu," but the Turkish censor-

ship promptly vetoed the appearance of a crowned head on the stage. King Louis XIII. was accordingly disrated to a Duke, but this did not satisfy the censor. He next objected to the presentment of an ecclesiastical personage of high rank; and, as the Cardinal could scarcely be turned into a layman, he was left out altogether. The play could not now very well be called "Richelieu" so the title was dropped, the love-interest was heightened and the play ultimately presented as a sentimental comedy under the name of "Mademoiselle de" something or other.

One last illustration of the official psychology of the period. When the Empress Elizabeth of Austria was assassinated at Geneva in 1898, the Turkish censorship allowed no reference to the manner of her death, which might have put ideas into the heads of subjects of the Sultan. So the announcement in the Turkish press began with the bare statement that her Majesty had died suddenly on the 10th September. But at this point the censor's thoroughness broke down, for he forgot to prevent the announcement from going on to say that the news had evoked universal horror and execration.

My second journey, which began in 1907 and ended in May, 1908, was made at the close of an epoch, an epoch interpreted politically by the Treaty of Berlin. Within two months of my return there had broken out in Macedonia the revolution of the Young Turks which in 1909 was to dethrone Abdul Hamid; and there quickly followed the Turco-Italian War for the possession of Tripoli, which paved the way for the two Balkan

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

Wars and was finally swallowed up in the titanic struggle of 1914-1918. Thus I have known Turkey in the reigns of three of the four sons of Sultan Abdul Mejid who in succession occupied the throne of Osman and actually in the lifetimes of all four, since Sultan Murad V, although deposed in 1876, did not die till the autumn of 1904. My first and second journeys were made during the absolutist régime of Sultan Abdul Hamid II,<sup>1</sup> one of the most baffling of the personalities who have had a share in shaping the destinies of the modern world because a blend of qualities difficult to reconcile in one individual. Astute yet credulous, well informed but a seeker of counsel from his Interpreter of Dreams; apprehensive to the point of neurasthenia yet a player for high stakes; callous in allowing the shedding of human life in the mass yet so sensitive as regards its individual extinction that he could scarcely bring himself, and then only after hours of painful deliberation, to confirm the death sentences pronounced by his Courts; the Master of an Empire that was still wide if it was no longer great and of a Court synonymous with lavish ceremonial, yet simple in his attire and a man to whom personal display was utterly foreign; the Lord of a harem well stocked with women who, in the words of Sir Charles Eliot's *Turkey in Europe*, "would account his slightest and most transient favours her highest glory," yet a scorner of pleasure whose mode of life was that of an over-worked Civil Servant.

Mehmed Reshad,<sup>2</sup> the next brother to succeed,

<sup>1</sup> 1842-1918; reigned 1876-1909.

<sup>2</sup> 1844-1918; reigned 1909-1918.

had still, when I returned from my second journey, to exchange the drowsy confinement of his Bosphorus Palace for the throne of Osman and was as yet absorbed in the poems and precepts of Jelal ed-Dîn Rûmi, the founder of the Order of Dancing Dervishes. As Sultan, Mehmed V was a modern equivalent of the Merovingian *roi fainéant*, the living embodiment of sovereignty—but no more than that—who was carted about to be shown to his subjects, a heavy, doddering and kindly puppet who found in the religious practices of that friendly, tolerant Order now, alas, suppressed, some consolation for his enforced political inactivity. Even he must have appreciated the irony of the situation when, after the Dardanelles Campaign, he was invited by his Ministers to assume the martial title of *Ghazi*, “the Conqueror.”

The fourth brother, Mehmed VI Vahid ed-Dîn,<sup>1</sup> was the last and it may well be the unhappiest of the long line of Padishahs. He succeeded Sultan Reshad four months before the Turkish armistice was signed at Mudros and was throughout his troubled reign pathetically anxious for an understanding with Great Britain. But with the emergence of Mustafa Kemal Turkish public opinion veered away from the pro-Ally Sultan and his faithful Vizier Damad Ferid; the rising tide of a new Turkish nationalism was not to be stemmed. Loyal, harassed, well intentioned Vahid ed-Dîn was swept away; for a short period of transition a Khalif without the Sultanate co-existed with the Republican régime in the person of his cousin Abdul Mejid;<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1861-1926; reigned 1918-1922.

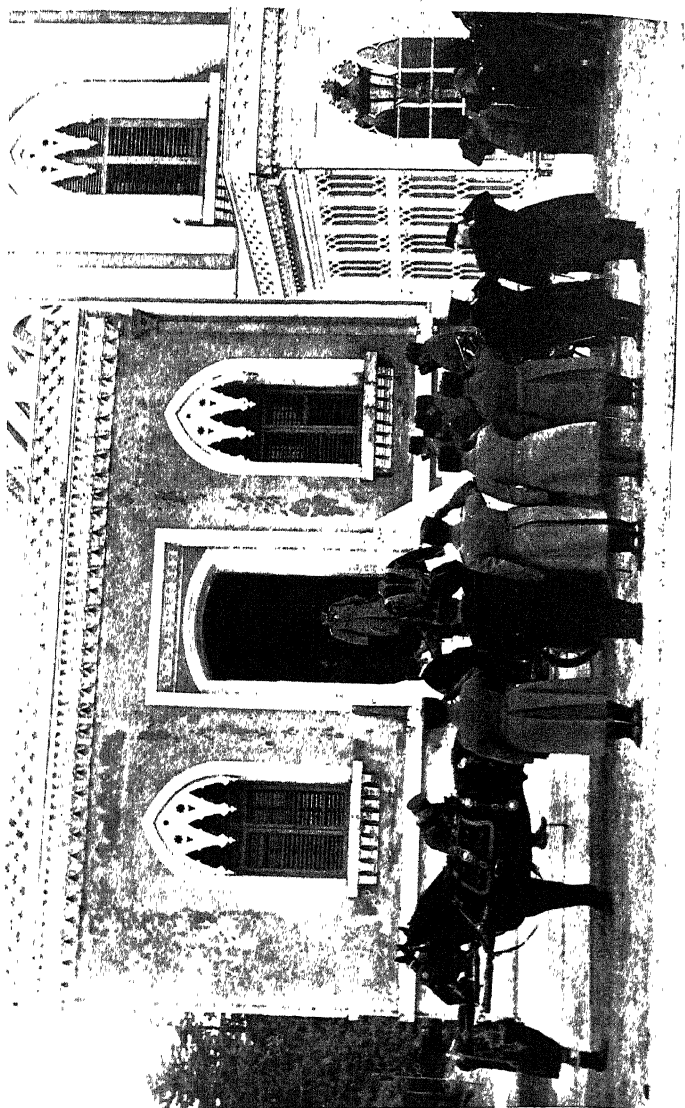
<sup>2</sup> b. 1868; Khalif 1922-1924.

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

and the throne of Stambul then disappeared in the wake of its kindred throne of Peking as the Commander of the Faithful went the way of the Son of Heaven.

Of all the regions in the Near and Middle East which I have visited since 1904 there is not one but has changed ownership or at least régime, in some cases more than once. Mount Athos has no longer a Moslem overlord; in Salonika, too, the crescent has made way for the blue and white flag of the *Yunan*. The first Mpret of Albania, William of Wied, has come and gone, a transient and embarrassed phantom; and the Egyptian rights over Thasos have passed, with him, into the limbo of forgotten things. Over the Dodecanese there now floats the white cross of Savoy, which the islanders had not seen since Villiers de l'Isle Adam sailed out of Rhodes with his knights on the first day of 1523. Even Cyprus, with its greater stability, has changed its status from Turkish territory under British suzerainty to that of a British Crown Colony.

Thirty years ago Ferdinand of Coburg was still Prince of Bulgaria, still made his annual *salaam* in Constantinople—his visit *ad limina*—as Vali of Eastern Rumelia. Nikita of Montenegro, great-nephew of the last Prince-Bishop of the Black Mountain, was not yet a constitutional king but lorded it over his Principality, now no longer on the political map, with patriarchal picturesqueness. Old Kiamil and Küchük Said were the Elder Statesmen of Turkey, while Enver was an obscure Staff-Captain and Talaat was earning four pounds a month as a telegraphist in Salonika. In Athens



SULTAN MEHMED VI. AT THE SELAMLIK





the Diadoch Constantine was smarting under his defeat by the Turks in 1897, while Mustafa Kemal, his victor of a quarter of a century later, had not yet loomed on the horizon. Venizelos was a village politician unheard of outside his native Crete, and the dynasty of Glücksberg seemed as firmly established as a dynasty can be in Greece.

Husein, the future Sherif of Mecca, a hostage at the Court of Abdul Hamid, could not in his wildest dreams have imagined that within a few years he would become for a while his Hashimite Majesty, dignified with the portentous title of *Jelaletkum*; <sup>1</sup> that he would see one of his sons succeed him as King of the Hejaz before following him into exile, another pass by the transitory throne of Damascus to that of Iraq, a third renew in the Amirate of Transjordan, under a British Mandate, the Crusaders' Principality of Oultre-Jourdain, with the Cross and the Crescent co-operating in developing a territory once fiercely contested between the two. Ibn Saud, the powerful Wahhabi king, was then a cloud no bigger than a man's hand; and a revived Arabian Empire was as little thought of as was a Turkish Republic in conjunction with a Turkish Khalifate. More improbable than either would have seemed a laicized Turkish Republic divorced from the faith and hierarchy of Islam and contradicting in almost every respect the principles on which the old Turkey had been based. The French would have been surprised to learn that soon they would be singing again "Partant pour la Syrie"; Dr. Herzl's programme, "the creation in Palestine of a home for the Jewish people secured

<sup>1</sup> 1853-1931; King 1916-1924.

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

by public law," was an aspiration that seemed far indeed from realization. The most likely heir-apparent to the Sultan in Palestine was Nicholas II.

So much for the political changes; the psychological changes in the peoples of the Near East form too complex and uncertain a subject to be touched upon here. The future has yet to reveal what will be the development of the new Turkey, from which the inspiration and creative element of past Turkish greatness—that of Islam—have been deliberately excluded. Nor is it possible to judge as yet the effect on the Persians of their transition from the rule of the effete and degenerate Tatar dynasty of the Kajars to the vigorous and indigenous rule of Riza Shah Pehlevi. But let us hope that the visible and external manifestations of these changes are no indication of the inward change, for these manifestations would suggest, if taken alone, that Eastern peoples were losing their individual characteristics and were aiming only at a drab uniformity with the West. The cheap and nasty billycocks and felt hats, the nastier cloth caps, for which the Turk has had to exchange his becoming if unpractical fez, strike the most depressing note in those who could enjoy in the old Turkey at least the picturesque variety of appropriate and æsthetically satisfying clothes; it is difficult to see what the Persian has gained by the loss of his black astrakhan or felt bonnet and its replacement by the képi of field-blue which Riza Shah has prescribed as his contribution to that "bowlerization" (if I may so term it) of the East which is now being imposed on their respective subjects by the *Duci* of Hither Asia. It is a

curious thought that only in British Cyprus and Italian Rhodes can an Ottoman Turk now wear a fez and can still write his language—if he wants to—in the Arabic script.

Perhaps Eastern Europe has suffered somewhat less than Western Asia in this respect since the beginning of the century. It is true that, with the disappearance of Montenegrin independence, there has almost disappeared from the Black Mountain its beautiful and costly national dress, partly on account of hard times, partly because there is now no longer a nation to stimulate the impoverished Montenegrin to make the necessary sacrifice on behalf of its traditions. Albania, on the other hand, is still in customs and happily in costume quite four centuries behind the rest of Europe, while some travellers have professed to discover that the baggy breeches of the Bosnians have tended of late (can it be through the influence of Oxford?) to become even baggier. Yet, when all is said and done, the Levant of to-day is very different from the Levant of thirty years ago and is daily invalidating the saying of de Vogüé: "*L'Orient, qui ne sait plus faire d'histoire, a le noble privilège de conserver intacte celle d'autrefois.*" On the site of my little Greek *khân* at Rhodes there now stands a luxurious Lido Palace hotel with a bath-room to every bedroom; Angora and Tirana are showing the present age how picturesque old Moslem towns and villages may be converted into utilitarian modern capitals; the Jewish township of Tel Aviv that has grown up since the War on the sands beside Jaffa brings into comparison with that ancient *échelle* of the Levant not so much the standards of the

## AN EASTERN CHEQUERBOARD

twentieth century as those of the twenty-first; the contrast becomes yet sharper on the shores of the Lake of Galilee, where Zionist buildings of German *Sachlichkeit*, spreading from Tiberias, are beginning to change the physiognomy of a landscape that has otherwise remained unaltered since the days of the New Testament. No, the saying that we must apply to the Near East to-day is no longer de Vogüé's. It is Galileo's: "*Eppur si muove.*"

والسلام

## GLOSSARY

A. = Arabic.	P. = Persian.
Arm. = Armenian.	R. = Russian.
G. = Greek.	S. = Syriac.
T. = Turkish.	

*aghal* (A.), cord of camel-hair or wool bound round the *keffiyeh* (q.v.).

*antikaji* (T.), dealer in antiquities.

*ashiret* (A.), clan; sept; tribe (especially with reference to the Nestorians of the Hakkiari Mountains).

*ayet* (A.), verse or sentence from the Qoran.

*charshaf* (T.), lit. a sheet: the garment, covering head and dress, worn out of doors by Turkish women who have not adopted European or semi-European fashions.

*chibuc* (T.), Turkish pipe with long straight stem.

*divan*, *divan-kané* (P.), formal court or reception, and place where these are held; guest-chamber.

*Effendi* (T.), gentleman, a corruption of the Greek word εὐθύντης.

*evqaf* (T. form of A. *awqaf*, plural of *waqf*), property dedicated under the Moslem religious law to the service of God; the Ministry in charge of the same.

*Fâtiha* (A.), lit. the " opener "; the first *Sura* of the Qoran.

*firman* (P.), official commission, Patent or rescript.

*bagios* (fem. *hagia*) (G.), Saint.

*baram* (A.), a sacred place; sanctuary.

*baremlik* (T.), the private or women's quarters of a Moslem house, as opposed to the *selamlik*, the reception room or rooms.

*iconostasis* (G.), screen hung with icons (paintings of saints), which in the Orthodox and other of the Eastern Churches separates the apse and altar from the nave.

*katholikon* (G.), principal church of a Greek monastery.

*keffiyeh* (A.), white or coloured silk cloth worn by Arabs on the head and fastened by the *aghal* (q.v.).

*kellion* (G.), cell of solitary hermit in Greek monasticism.

*kbân* (P.), inn with accommodation for men and beasts.

*keboja* (P.), in Turkish use a schoolmaster; a teacher, especially of the *ulema* (q.v.) class; a teacher of divinity.

## GLOSSARY

- malik* (S.), chief of a Nestorian clan.  
*Mar* (fem. *Mart*) (S.), Saint; Lord (applied to bishops).  
*medresé* (A.), school or college of Qoranic Law.  
*millet* (A.), non-Moslem subject-nation of Moslem States.  
*minber* (A.), pulpit of a mosque.  
*Mir* (P.), Prince; ruler; chieftain.  
*mudir* (A.), director; subordinate administrative official.  
*mutesarrif* (A.), administrative officer in charge of a *sanjaq* or *liwa* (q.v.).  
*muxbike* (R.), peasant.  
*namaz* (P.), the five daily prayers obligatory on all Moslems.  
*qavass* (T.), attendant and preceder of dignitaries, official and ecclesiastical, in the Near East.  
*qibleh* (A.), point or direction of adoration in Islam.  
*qonaq* (T.), large house, palace, official residence.  
*rabbān* (S.), monk; *rabbanta*, nun.  
*rayah* (A.), member of non-Moslem tributary *millet* (q.v.).  
*sanjaq* (T.), lit. banner, standard. Administratively, the principal sub-division of a *vilayet* and itself divided into *qazas* or *qaimaqamliks*; as such, it is the equivalent of the Arabic *liwa* and is administered by a *mutesarrif* (q.v.).  
*sariq* (T.), the white turban worn round the fez by the *ulema* class; *sariqli*, a wearer of the *sariq*.  
*sema-khané* (P.), dancing floor of the Mevlevi dervishes.  
*seyyid* (A.), descendant of the Prophet.  
*Sheitan* (A.), Satan.  
*skete* (G.), group of *kellia* (q.v.).  
*Sufi* (A.), a class of Moslem mystic.  
*suq* (A.), a street of shops; bazaar.  
*tezkeré* (T.), local Turkish passport required to travel from one vilayet of the Ottoman Empire to another.  
*türbé* (A.), tomb, shrine.  
*ulema* (A.), plural of *alim*, one learned in the Qoranic Law.  
*Vali* (A.), Governor-General of a *vilayet* (cf. above under *sanjaq*).  
*vartabed* (Arm.), member of Armenian higher regular clergy.  
*wadi* (A.), valley; stream.  
*Yunan* (T.), i.e. "Ionian," the name given by Turks to Greeks who are Hellenic subjects, in distinction to Rûm ("Roman"), the term by which they denote Greeks of Ottoman nationality.  
*zikir* (A.), ceremony or ritual in Dervish Orders.

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